
A MARITAL STATUS BASED STUDY OF WORK LIFE BALANCE (WLB) AND ORGANISATIONAL ROLE STRESS (ORS) AMONG WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) INDUSTRY IN CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT

One of the significant changes witnessed in the labor markets in India has been the entry of women employees in the rapidly growing IT sector. As the women take on the role of working professionals in addition to their traditional role of homemaker, they are under great pressure to balance their work and personal lives. Stress is inevitable in today's complex life. Right from the time of birth till death, an individual is invariably exposed to various stressful situations. The threat of political and economic imbalances, uncertainties, unemployment, poverty, urbanization, socio economic complexities and innumerable other factors contribute to stress. ORS originates in organizational demands that are experienced by the individual. Stress is built up in the concept of role which is conceived as the position a person occupies in a system. This study attempts to understand how work and family related factors influence the WLB and ORS among unmarried and married women IT employees in Chennai City. WLB and ORS scale is used on a sample of 423 women IT employees to explore the level of WLB and role stress, as perceived by the respondents. The analysis on the basis of marital status of the respondents report no statistically significant difference on the basis of WLB but reported statistically significant differences on the basis of ORS between married and unmarried groups. As far as, components of WLB are concerned, statistically significant difference have been reported on personal needs, time management and team work. Statistically significant differences have been reported on inter role distance, role isolation, role ambiguity, resource inadequacy, role stagnation, self-role distance and role expectation conflict role stressors.

KEYWORDS: Career Paths, Organisational Role Stress, Women in IT and Work Life Balance.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1990's India emerged as a major player in the field of software engineering, IT services and Web based services. Currently India is IT Super Power. The purpose of this study is to understand the phenomenon of the WLB and organizational role stress among women IT employees in India. Some of the stressors affecting IT employees are common to other professional groups; still some stressors are unique to this occupational group. The present study is an attempt to examine and understand the WLB and nature of role stress among women IT employees in Chennai.

Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity or demand related to what an individual desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. Mismanaged organizational stress is detrimental for the human resources in the organization. High levels of unchecked and unmanaged role stress not only undermine the quality, productivity and creativity of the employees but also employees' health, well-being and morale. Stress may result in problems such as hyper-irritability, sleep disturbances, disturbed interpersonal relationships, as well as wide range of somatic and psychological patterns detrimental to the individual. This may also have negative economic implications such as poor quality of work, low productivity, absenteeism, high turnover.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Indian women have traditionally emphasized on homemaking and worked within the framework of the family system. However, with changing social dynamics, women are joining the workforce in big numbers. As such, they have to perform and balance between two spheres, the familial as well as professional.

2.1 WLB among Indian Women IT Employees

Reimara and Vasanthi (2011) have studied how work and family related factors influence the work-family balance of 13 Bangalore based Indian women IT employees. The narratives reveal six major themes: familial influences on life choices, multi-role responsibilities and attempts to negotiate them, self and professional identity, work-life challenges and coping strategies, organisational policies and practices and social support.

Subrat Kumar Parida (2012) has studied the opportunity for individuals to balance their home and work effectively through a primary study by collecting data from 162 employees of IT organisations in India (Bhubaneswar, Pune and Bangalore) and USA. The author concluded with few suggestions to organisations for their employees' WLB.

Santhi and Sundar (2012) have explored the aspects to measure the level of satisfaction, major factors that influence WLB, and overall WLB of 350 women employees in Chennai based IT industry. The study reveals overall satisfaction of the respondents across the various WLB parameters, that 55% are highly satisfied with current initiatives. They suggested that the management of surveyed IT industries has to find out the reasons for moderate and dissatisfaction prevailing among the rest of the 45% and seek to address the issues.

Chandrasekar et al (2013) have studied WLB of employees of IT organisations in Technopark, Trivandrum. The sample size (305) made up of 172 men and 133 women have been taken employing convenience sampling. The major findings of the study were that there were some factors of work demand that interferes with the personal life which leads to an imbalance state; WLB is different based on gender and nature of jobs and WLB has a positive relationship with job satisfaction.

Chitra Devi and Sheela Rani (2013) have studied the correlation between the two directions of conflict, namely, work-life conflict and life-work conflict and WLB. They conducted a survey among 711 women employees working in BPO organisations located in Chennai and assessed their level of WLB based on their marital and parental status. The authors suggest creation of family-friendly organizational culture that facilitates creative solutions to work life issues. The work-life issues are not only problems of the individual and employer but also of the society.

Lakshmi Narayanan and Savarimuthu (2013) have explored the impact of the dependent child's age on the work family conflict experienced by the working mothers in the IT industry in Bangalore. The research findings as revealed by 176 respondents having children confirm that work family conflict of the working mother differs depending upon the age of their children.

2.2 ORS among Indian Women IT Employees

Mohsin Aziz (2004) has investigated the ORS on a sample of 264 women IT professionals in India to explore the level of role stress. Resource inadequacy has emerged as the most potent role stressor, followed by role overload and personal inadequacy. The study also brings out differences in the level of stress between married and unmarried respondents on inter role distance. However, level of education does not emerge as a significant differentiator on stressors.

Vimala and Madhavi (2009) have explored the influence of age and experience on stress and depression and the relationship between stress and depression among women IT professionals in Chennai. The study reveals that women IT professionals experience a moderate level of overall stress and stress dimensions. The study also shows a likelihood of a strong relationship between overall stress and depression. Madhavi and Vimala (2011) have observed from 485 women IT professionals in Chennai that the work family issues significantly influence all the dimensions of role stress except role erosion, personal inadequacy, self-role distance and resource inadequacy.

Kavitha, Kavitha and Arulmurugan (2012) have used ORS scale on a sample of 264 women IT professionals in Tamil Nadu to explore the level of role stress. Resource inadequacy and role overload have emerged as potent role stressors tag on by personal inadequacy.

Kumudha and Jancy Rani (2012) have studied problems faced by women employees in IT industry in Coimbatore. The study on 120 employees reveals that most of the respondents are facing physical and psychological problems due to their nature of work.

AsmitaBhattacharaya and BholaNath Ghosh (2012) have carried out a detailed sociological analysis on the issues of opportunities and constraints, women employees face in the Indian IT sector from different literatures.

Ranjit and Mahespriya (2012) have studied the job stress and its impact on quality of life of 201 women software professionals in Bangalore. The study concludes that job stress influences the quality of life and demographic variables influence level of job stress and quality of life.

Monica and Santhi (2013) have investigated the organizational factors influencing stress formation with reference to the random sample of 100 working women in IT sector of Greater Noida region of New Delhi. The study reveals that high workload, long continuous working hours, office politics, lack of clarity in organizational roles, attitude of superiors and inflexible organizational policies are emerging as major organizational factors influencing stress formation.

Saundarya and Karthik (2013) have studied the circumstances under which an Indian woman professional decides to take a break. The respondent's sample of 235 (14% Male) was spread across all major cities in India. The study covered both employee and employer perspectives.

A study of the surveys indicates that very little of research activities carried out to study the WLB and ORS among Women employees in IT Industry in Chennai. An attempt has been made to bring out the WLB and ORS among Women IT employees through a detailed analysis. The objective is to assess the WLB and ORS among Women IT employees in Chennai City.

3. METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUMENT

The study uses a descriptive research design. A survey was conducted among the women IT employees with the help of a questionnaire. The study was conducted in Chennai, India. Chennai has the maximum number of software concerns in India next to Bangalore. The software industry in Chennai has extended its business in all verticals. Chennai is the most suitable place to conduct this research in India.

In this study, a stratified random sampling technique is used for selecting sample. Stratified random sampling was the best sampling method available for this study. The study on WLB and ORS was conducted among 423 women IT employees in Chennai city.

3.1 WLB Scale

The instrument used for collecting data is "WLB Scale". The WLB scale is intended to diagnose the level and components of WLB as perceived by the respondents. The WLB is a generally used instrument to measure six WLB components namely Social Needs (SN), Personal Needs (PN), Time Management (TM), Team Work (TW), Compensation and Benefits (C&B) and Work (W). The scale contains six items for each component of WLB with a total of 36 statements and uses a five point scale from 0-4. Even though many scales are available to measure WLB, they do not exactly fit into the societal and familial concepts existing in the Indian society. The WLB scale used, was developed by UdaiPareek and SurabhiPurohit (2010) and has high reliability and validity with reference to Indian context. It can be used to generate data about various components of WLB experienced by a respondent. Analysis of data collected can help in identifying weak aspects, as indicated by low scores in an occupational group and strategies can be suggested to deal with the issues.

3.2 ORS Scale

The instrument used for collecting data is "ORS Scale". The ORS scale is a comprehensive tool to elicit data about different role stressors afflicting a respondent. It covers a range of stressors that may be experienced by an occupational group. The ORS is a widely used instrument to measure ten role stressors namely Inter Role Distance (IRD), Role Stagnation (RS), Role Expectation Conflict (REC), Role Erosion (RE), Role Overload (RO), Role Isolation (RI), Personal Inadequacy (PI), Self-Role Distance (SRD), Role Ambiguity (RA) and Resource Inadequacy (RIn). The scale contains five items for each role stress with a total of 50 statements and uses a five point scale from 0-4. The ORS scale was developed by UdaiPareek and SurabhiPurohit (2010) and has high reliability and validity. It can be used to generate data about varied stresses experienced by a respondent. Analysis of data collected can help in identifying potent stressors in an occupational group. Strategies can be suggested to manage and reduce stress (UdaiPareek 2013).

4. WLB BASED ON MARITAL STATUS

Marriage imposes certain responsibilities on women having a significant impact for her decision to work. The problem of unmarried women is different from that of married women. The way in which they approach the problem and perception also differ. The marital status of the sample respondents is presented in Table 1. According to George and Mallery (2003) the Cronbach's alpha

value of 0.70 is considered as an acceptable measure of reliability. The computed Cronbach's alpha coefficient of internal consistency value in this WLB study is 0.744. Therefore this WLB study will emerge reliable. The analyses on the basis of marital status of the respondents report no statistically significant difference between the married and unmarried groups with WLB of 75.19 and 78.19 respectively with standard deviation around 16. As far as, components of WLB are concerned, statistically significant differences have been reported on personal needs, time management and team work between married and unmarried groups. Married employees are better when compared to unmarried on the basis of allotting time for personal needs, this may be due to their experience and family responsibility they complete their work on time in a planned manner. Unmarried employees' need lesser multitasking with multiple responsibilities than married and this may lead to better time management by unmarried women. Unmarried employees may be more flexible and sportive than married women so they perform better on team activities.

Table 1 WLB Scores based on Marital Status

Components	Unmarried (53.4%), n=226		Married (46.6%), n=197		t value	Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
SN	11.83	4.68	11.11	3.85	1.736	0.083
PN	11.14	4.12	12.53	3.61	-3.713	0.000*
TM	11.81	3.75	10.45	3.55	3.819	0.000*
TW	15.11	3.79	14.23	3.36	2.524	0.012**
C&B	14.91	4.43	14.18	3.67	1.852	0.065
W	13.40	3.98	12.69	4.07	1.802	0.072
WLB	78.19	16.79	75.19	15.63	1.901	0.058

* Significant at 0.01 level

** Significant at 0.05 level

5. ORS BASED ON MARITAL STATUS

The data collected from women IT employees, on analysis, resulted in Cronbach's alpha coefficient of internal consistency value of 0.961 and the reliability of subscales ranging from 0.687 to 0.831. Therefore this ORS study will emerge reliable. The analysis on the basis of marital status of the respondents report a statistically significant difference between the married and unmarried groups with mean ORS score of 85.88 and 75.31 respectively as in Table 2. This is also observed by Mohsin Aziz (2004).

Table 2ORS Scores based on Marital Status

Stressors	Unmarried (53.4%), n=226		Married (46.6%), n=197		t value	Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
IRD	7.95	4.44	9.69	4.61	-3.936	0.000*
RS	8.64	4.07	9.77	4.46	-2.718	0.007*
REC	6.84	4.26	7.87	4.55	-2.397	0.017**
RE	8.64	3.76	9.09	3.57	-1.273	0.204
RO	7.85	4.15	8.30	4.47	-1.090	0.276
RI	7.09	4.44	8.70	4.48	-3.706	0.000*
PI	7.73	4.11	7.99	4.25	-0.647	0.518
SRD	7.80	4.24	8.94	4.81	-2.565	0.011**
RA	6.20	4.84	7.59	4.47	-3.058	0.002*
RIn	6.59	4.60	7.94	4.90	-2.912	0.004*
ORS	75.31	35.61	85.88	40.21	-2.932	0.004*

* Significant at 0.01 level

** Significant at 0.05 level

The higher level of ORS among married women than among unmarried women employees is explained in terms of traditional trends, demands of society and more roles and responsibilities assigned to them as a mother, wife and homemaker, as compared to unmarried women. The overall lower score of unmarried women on ORS leads to the suggestion for reduced work and home conflict. It means they are more relaxed and enjoy their working and personal lives as compared to married women employees. It is also true that sometimes unmarried women employees may face stressful situations at their specific workplaces, but they do not find themselves compelled to perform such type of multiple roles in their lives as married women. It is the actual cause of the difference between the stress levels of married and unmarried women employees, as exposed during the present study. As for as constituent role stressors are concerned, statistically significant difference has been reported on inter role distance, role isolation, role ambiguity, resource inadequacy, role stagnation, self-role distance and role expectation conflict.

Statistically significant difference was observed between married and unmarried respondents on inter role distance. Inter role distance is reflective of the conflict between organizational and non-organisational roles. This is especially relevant for dual career couples. As long as one member of the family stays at home and takes care of the family work, the inter role conflict is expected to be less. In case of dual career couples, meeting routine as well as emergent needs of the family become difficult. Despite gradual shift in societal attitude and values regarding gender roles in India, women still shoulder the major responsibility for family and household activities, especially those related to child rearing. Women have traditionally emphasized on homemaking and family activities. Such a group is likely to place equally greater emphasis on both roles.

Most roles involve some interaction with other persons and these interactions can be a source of satisfaction and fulfillment (Spector, 1997). These interactions can be an important source of stress too, particularly when they result in interpersonal conflict (Keenan and Newton, 1985). Stress among colleagues may arise from competition, personality conflict and office politics. Whatever be the reason, it often leads to role isolation. Role isolation is a situation where there is a lack of linkages of one's role with other roles in the organization. Although, statistically significant difference between the two groups is reported on this count, the stress on this count is well within manageable limits. Role isolation may result from poor relationship at work. Research (McLean, 1979, Beehr and McGrath, 1992) shows that social support from others within the organisations can directly alleviate psychological stress. However, social support may be missing in a situation where everyone's job is at stake and the future is uncertain. Social psychological research (Forsyth, 2010) shows that competition is often a precursor to conflict. Employees may not get heightens when they compete for scarce organizational resources. At a time marked by cost cutting and employees on the bench, such behavior is quite natural.

Statistically significant difference was also observed on resource inadequacy. Married women reported statistically significant higher personal inadequacy as compared to unmarried women. As mentioned earlier, there is rapid change in the field of IT. The ability of employees to keep pace with accelerating rate of change of technology depends on their ability to keep upgrading and broadening their skill set. This a difficult task for married women who have to in general, juggle between job and family more than unmarried women.

Statistically significant difference was reported between the two groups on the count of role expectation conflict. It represents the conflicting expectations or demands by the different role senders' that is the significant others who have expectations from the role. Married women have shown more role expectation conflict than unmarried women. This is quit natural as married women generally respond to a bigger "set of significant others".

6. CAREER PATHS BASED ON MARITAL STATUS

In this section, a study of the career paths of Chennai women employees working in the IT industry is presented. The objective of the study is to understand the circumstances under which Chennai women employees decide to take a career break. The study is done on a cross domain sample of IT employees across Chennai City. The survey was conducted by means of a questionnaire that addresses the IT workforce and carried questions pertaining to career breaks of women in this industry, in particular. Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics of career paths. The questions attempted to cover both the married and unmarried perspectives.

Table 3 Career Paths

Descriptions	Number of Respondents	Percentage
IT Career Satisfaction		
Being Challenged	176	41.6
Compensation	92	21.7
Flexibility	123	29.1
Relationship with Manager	17	4.0
Relationship with peers	44	10.4
Benefits	77	18.2
Others	9	2.1
Life Events that Impact Women's Career		
Higher Studies	79	18.7
Marriage	244	57.7
Spouse Relocation	112	26.5
Pregnancy	144	34.0
Child care	161	38.1
Elder care	59	13.9
Health Issues	142	33.6
Forces Women to Take Break		
Long Working Hours	261	61.7
Lack of Support system at Home	88	20.8
Poor day care and nursing facilities	69	16.3
Long commute time to work	29	6.9
Night Shifts	128	30.3
Pressure/request from family	85	20.1
Lack of flexible working options	77	18.2
Unsafe environment	62	14.7
Lack of growth opportunities	16	3.8
Roles that are More Prone to Break		
Software Developers	199	47.0
Testing or Quality Engineers	82	19.4
Project leads	67	15.8
Business analysts	38	9.0
Business or client relationship managers	52	12.3

IT infrastructure support personnel	78	18.4
Senior leadership positions	68	16.1
How Long the Break		
3-6 months	142	33.6
7-12 months	116	27.4
1-2 years	141	33.3
3-5 years	22	5.2
Above 5 years	1	0.2
Maximum Break Duration for Comeback without Re-skilling		
3-6 months	204	48.2
7-12 months	118	27.9
1-2 years	83	19.6
3-5 years	4	0.7
No up-skilling/Reskilling required	15	3.5
Enablers required for Women's Uninterrupted Career		
Day care center/crèche	86	20.3
Flexi working options	255	60.3
Mentoring programs	26	6.1
Less strenuous work	63	14.9
Reduced working hours	125	29.6
Support/motivation from family and colleagues	164	38.8
Others	4	0.9
Preferred option of Comeback After Break		
Fulltime	23	5.4
Fulltime with flexible working hours	280	66.2
Part time	47	11.1
Work from home	122	28.8

6.1 Most Important Factor to IT Career Satisfaction

The respondents provided their opinion on what attracts them most in their IT career and is presented in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 IT Career Satisfaction

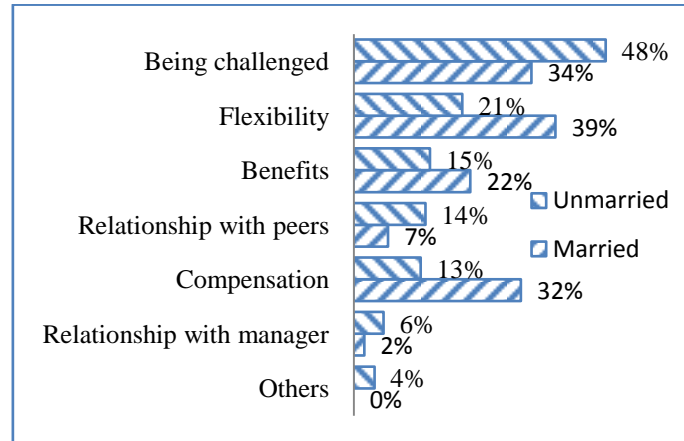
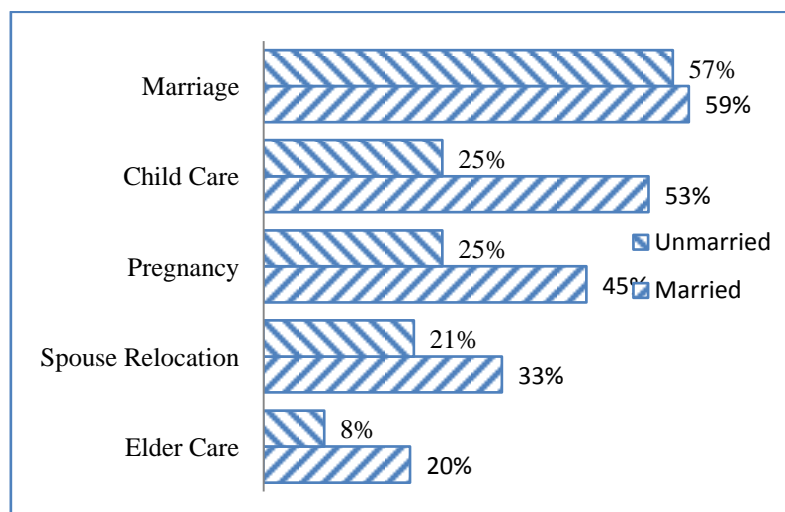


Figure1 shows forty eight percent of the unmarried women respondents feel that their 'being challenged' is the most important factor for their IT career satisfaction. This may be due to unmarried women are fresh out of college and looking for challenges, whereas married women feel flexibility (39%) followed by being challenged (34%) as the critical factor. This shows that the career satisfaction priorities are different for married women compared to unmarried. Married women play multiple roles, so they are inclined towards flexibility than being challenged. Because of financial commitments married women prefer compensation as their third priority. The outcome shows that relationship with manager is not considered as a major career satisfaction factor even though it is included as one of the options.

6.2 Social and Personal Factors

The popular responses on the life events that in turn result in women actually taking career breaks is depicted in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2 Social Factors



While marriage tops the list, unmarried with 57% and married with 59%. Child care and pregnancy were close behind with 53% and 45% respectively with married women. This finding does not go hand in hand with the early results of a survey conducted by Saundarya and Karthik(2013). This difference may be due to the quoted study covering both employee and employer perspectives as well as both men and women. The segregated analyses bring out both the unmarried and married perspectives. 25% of unmarried and 53% of married women believe that child care is the common social factor that makes taking break inevitable. Except marriage (57% and 59%) there is a clear difference in all other four social factors between unmarried and married women respondents, pregnancy (25% unmarried and 45% married), spouse relocation (21% unmarried and 33% married), elder care (8% unmarried and 20% married). This clear difference in opinion between married and unmarried except marriage may be due to non-exposure of unmarried women.

Fig. 3 Personal Factors

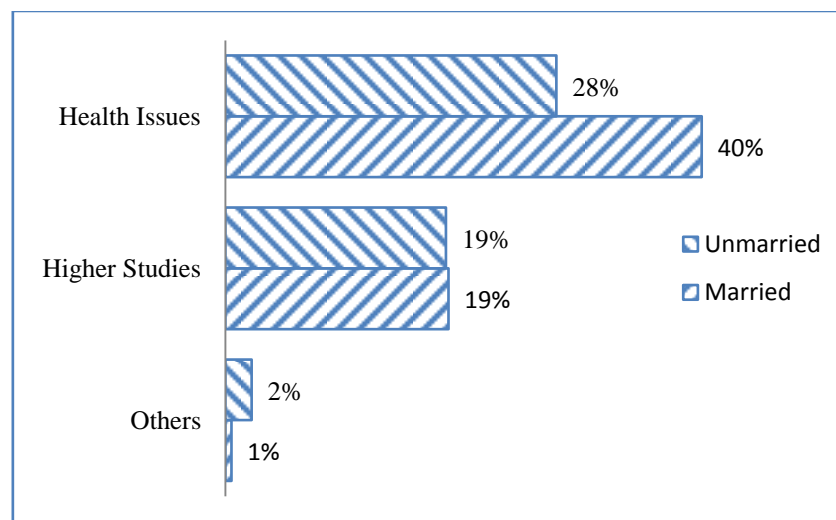
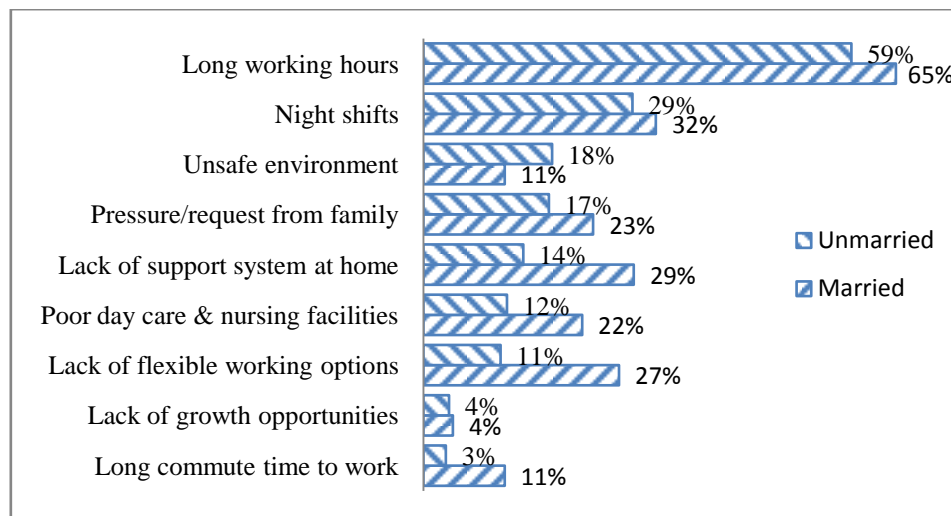


Figure3 shows twenty eight percent of the unmarried and forty percent of the married women respondents believe that health issues force women to drop their career pursuits. Nineteen percent of both unmarried and married women respondents believe that a desire to pursue higher studies as another personal derailer. These findings were inline with findings of Saundarya and Karthik(2013).

6.3 Structural Factors

It is interesting to note that a majority of the respondents believed that even if women overcome the social and personal barriers, their careers came to a screening halt upon hitting structural barriers as shown in Fig.4.

Fig. 4 Structural Factors

A majority of the survey respondents, 59% of unmarried and 65% of married feel those long working hours plays a crucial role in women's decision to quit. As in figure 4, 29% of unmarried and 32% of married feel that night shifts are not very favorable amongst women seeking to sustain their careers. The complete list of structural factors is given Fig. 4. This finding does not agree with the early results of a survey conducted by Saundarya and Karthik(2013).

6.4 Job Role Specific Factors

From Figure 5, it is inferred that atleast 9% of the respondents opine that women irrespective of their role and marital status take a break which includes developer, testers, IT support, project leads, client facing roles and business analysts.

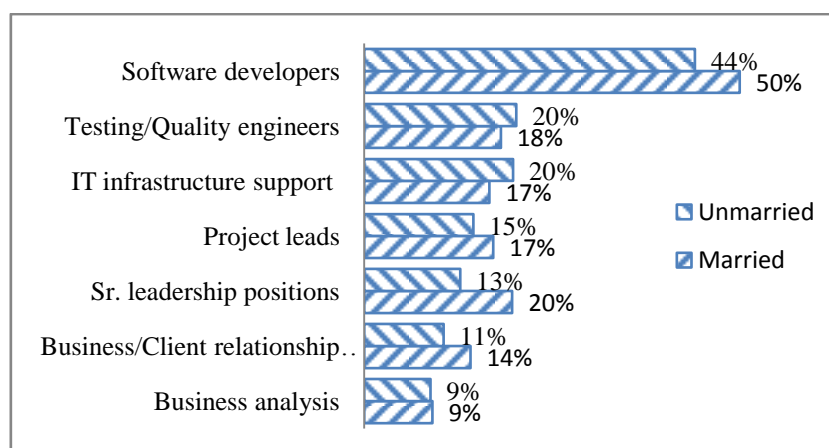
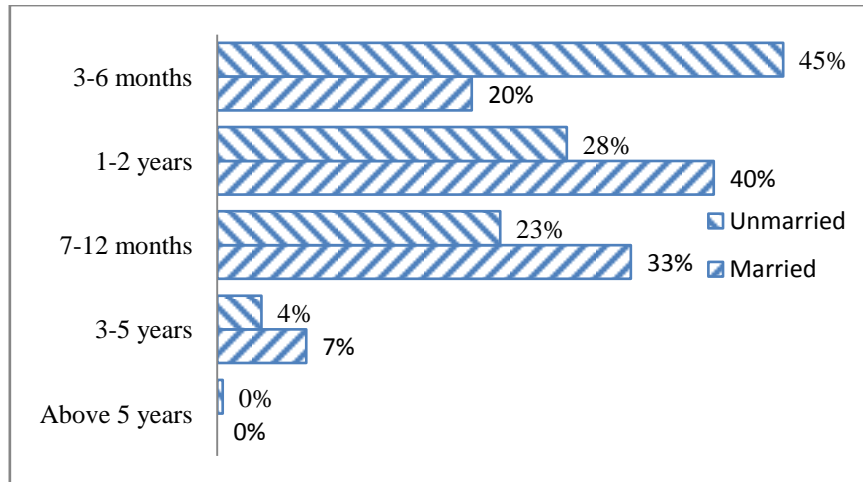
Fig. 5 Job Role Specific Factors

Figure5 shows 44% of unmarried and 50% of the married respondents opine that software developers are top role that is most prone to break. This finding does not go hand in hand with the early results of a survey conducted by Saundarya and Karthik(2013).

6.5 Career Break

The study also sheds light on the duration of breaks, training after break and career enablers that women employees in IT typically needs as in Fig. 6 -8.

Fig. 6 Length of Break



It was found that career breaks of women are largely between 1-2 years. 45% of unmarried and 40% of married respondents feel 3-6 months and 1-2 years of break respectively. Married women employees are looking for longer duration of breaks than unmarried due to family commitments.

The survey analysis of the duration of the career breaks that might not necessitate re-skilling or up-skilling is shown in Fig.7.

Fig. 7 Up/Reskilling

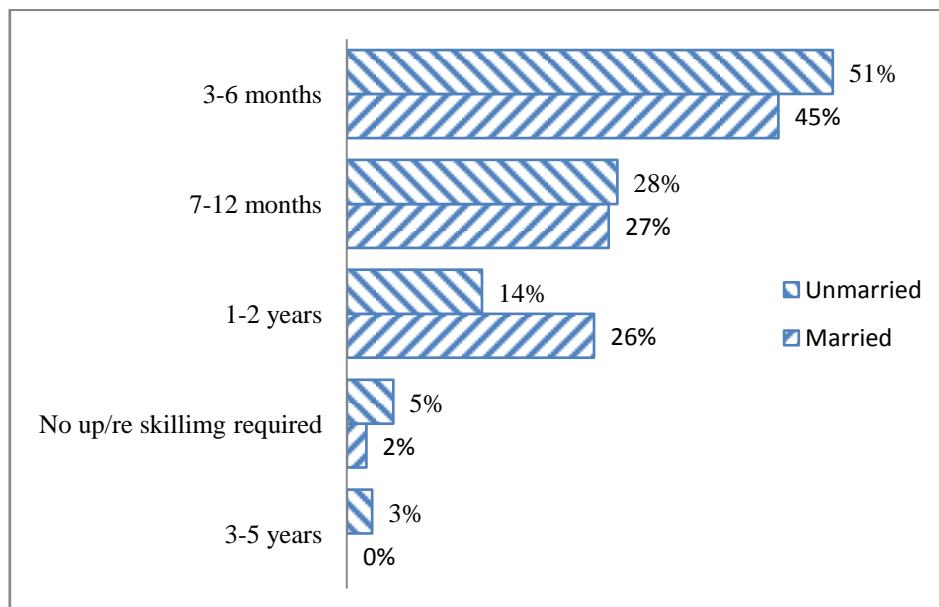
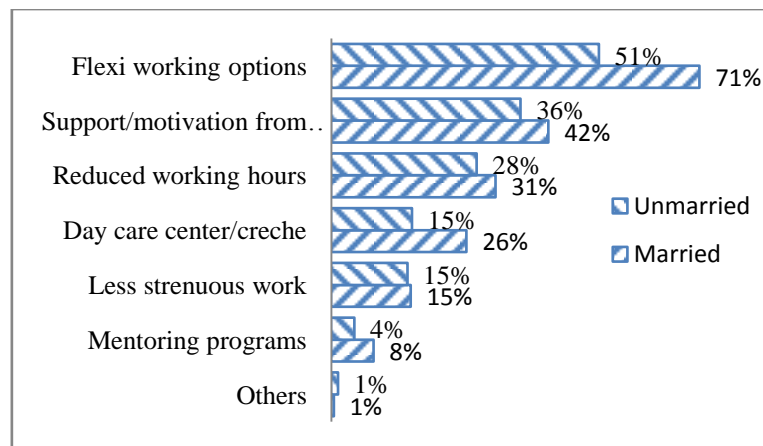


Figure7 shows that a majority of the respondents (51% unmarried and 45% married) are of the opinion that a 3-6 months break in the career of an IT professional will not require to undergo additional training once they get back to work. Only 5% feel that re/up skilling might not be necessary at all for women employees with career breaks. This is also observed by Saundarya and Karthik(2013).

A whopping majority of women 51% unmarried and 71% married feel that flexi time work is the most preferred career enabler that would aid women employees in sustaining career as in Fig. 8.

Fig. 8 Career Enablers



Support or motivation from family and colleagues is on the heels with 36% and 42% of unmarried and married respondents respectively, vouching for it. This finding goes hand in hand with the early results of a survey conducted by Saundarya and Karthik(2013). Reduced working hours (28% unmarried and 31% married) also help a woman balance career and personal life while doing justice to both.

6.6 Second Career Work Options

Analysis on the basis of preferred options of work for second career women is depicted in Fig. 9. **Fig. 9 Second Career Options**

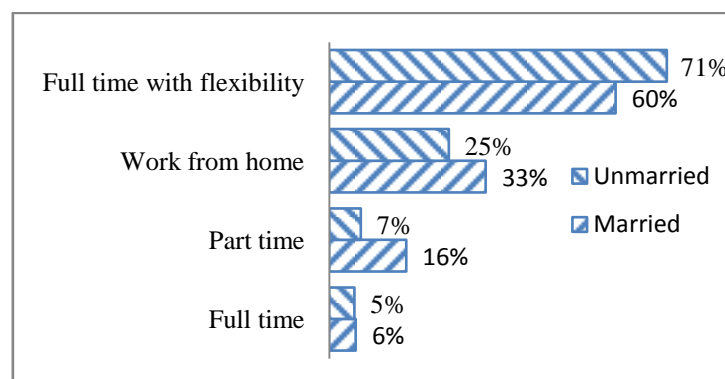


Figure9 shows that 71% of unmarried and 60% of married women respondents vote for full time work options with flexibilities that will aid the balancing act of women employees. 25% of unmarried and 33% of married feel that work from home is also not a bad option. There are fewer takers for part time work, with only 7% of unmarried and 16% of married vouching for it. Only a miniscule 5% of unmarried and 6% of married are ready to undertake full time work options after the career break. This is also observed by Saundarya and Karthik (2013).

7 SUMMARY

The perception of married and unmarried women IT employees on WLB and ORS was analysed and from the results of the analysis, it was observed that,

- Marital status has positive impact on personal needs, time management and team work components of WLB.
- Marital status has positive impact on inter role distance, role isolation, role ambiguity, resource inadequacy, role stagnation, self-role distance and role expectation conflict role stressors.

Study on career paths of married and unmarried women employees in IT industry, resulted in interesting insights into the myriad reasons for career breaks of women which could broadly classified as cultural, social, structural, personal and job role specific.

- Forty eight percent of the unmarried women respondents feel that their being challenged was the most important factor for their IT career satisfaction, whereas married women feel flexibility (39%) followed by being challenged (34%) as the critical factor.
- The popular responses on the life events that in turn result in women actually taking career breaks reveals marriage tops the list,unmarried with 57% and married with 59%.Child care and pregnancy were close behind with 53% and 45% respectively with married women.
- Twenty eight percent of the unmarried and forty percent of the married women respondents believe that health issues force women to drop their career pursuits. Nineteen percent of both unmarried and married women respondents believe that a desire to pursue higher studies as another personal derailer.
- A majority of the survey respondents, 59% of unmarried and 65% of married feel that long working hour plays a crucial role in women's decision to quit.
- Twenty nine percent of unmarried and 32% of married feel that night shift was not very favorable amongst women seeking to sustain their careers.
- Forty four percent of unmarried and 50% of the married respondents opine that software developers were top role that was most prone to break.
- The study also sheds light on the duration of breaks that woman employee in IT typically take. It was found that career breaks of women were largely between 1-2

years. 45% of unmarried and 40% of married respondents feel 3-6 months and 1-2 years respectively.

- A majority of the respondents (51% unmarried and 45% married) were of the opinion that a 3-6 months break in the career of an IT professional will not require to undergo additional training once they get back to work. Only 5% feel that re/up skilling might not be necessary at all for women employees with career breaks.
- A whopping majority of women 51% unmarried and 71% married feel that flexi time work was the most preferred career enabler that would aid women professional in sustaining career. Support or motivation from family and colleagues were on the heels with 36% and 42% of unmarried and married respondents respectively, vouching for it. Reduced working hours (28% unmarried and 31% married) also help a woman balance career and personal life while doing justice to both.
- Seventy one percent of unmarried and 60% of married women respondents vote for full time work options with flexibilities that will aid the balancing act of women employees. 25% of unmarried and 33% of married feel that work from home was also not a bad option. There were fewer takers for part time work, with only 7% of unmarried and 16% of married vouching for it. Only a miniscule 5% of unmarried and 6% of married were ready to undertake full time work options after the career break.

8 CONCLUSION

Chennai women have made a giant leap in the career front with their aspirations and there is no denying this fact. They have been among the chief beneficiaries of the IT boom and it follows that their career paths have many underlying intricacies waiting to be studied. The study examined the career breaks of women IT employees. The study reveals that their career paths are often not smooth and undisturbed. There are many factors cultural, social, structural, personal and role specific, those force them to digress from their ambitious career journeys. Identifying the pitfalls can be of immense use to the employed women themselves as it might help them take proactive measures to sustain their careers. Potential employers ready to exploit the women talent pool, can also gather insights and make their work environments more women friendly. For young women at the threshold of career, knowledge of what awaits can help better prepared to face the future and keep alive the sparks that ignited career in the first place.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors wish to extend their gratitude to the respondents who filled in and returned the questionnaires, without whom, this study would not have been possible.

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