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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	FORCASTING OF FINANCIAL MARKETS - APPLICATION OF FUZZY ASSOCIATION RULES <i>BHAGIRATHI NAYAK, DR. C. NAHAK & DR. ARUN KR. MISRA</i>	1
2.	PERCEIVED QUALITY OF SERVICES RENDERED BY UNIVERSITY LIBRARY: A CASE STUDY OF PANJAB UNIVERSITY MAIN LIBRARY, CHANDIGARH, INDIA <i>DR. TESHATSION SAHLU DESTA</i>	9
3.	DYNAMIC COMPENSATION SYSTEM FOR PAKISTAN <i>RABIA MUSHTAQ</i>	20
4.	DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EXAMPLE BASED ENGLISH-HINDI MACHINE TRANSLATION SYSTEM <i>VIVEK DUBEY & DR. H. R. SHARMA</i>	26
5.	INDIAN TELECOMMUNICATION SECTOR: A PARADIGM SHIFT <i>DR. HARSH DWIVEDI & KAVYA SAINI</i>	29
6.	A STUDY ON CONSTRUCTION OF EQUITY PORTFOLIO (OIL, IT, STEEL AND BANKING STOCKS) WITH REFERENCE TO THE SHARPE INDEX MODEL <i>P.VARADHARAJAN & DR. P VIKKRAMAN</i>	38
7.	A STUDY ON ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH SELF HELP GROUPS IN MAHABUBNAGAR DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH <i>M V S MAHENDRA, S ANANDA REDDY & M S BHAT</i>	44
8.	A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOLD, SILVER AND NIFTY <i>R.KARTHIKEYAN & DR. M. G. SARAVANARAJ</i>	50
9.	TV VIEWING PRACTICES OF INDIAN CHILDREN <i>DR. PAVLEEN KAUR & DR. RAGHBIR SINGH</i>	66
10.	TOURISM POTENTIAL IN VELLORE REGION - AN EMPIRICAL STUDY <i>DR. D. ASHOK</i>	71
11.	A STUDY ON STEPS TAKEN TO IMPROVE CREDIT AND SAVINGS IN RURAL INDIA <i>DR. P. UMA RANI</i>	73
12.	HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN INDIA: A STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE <i>DR. PRESHTH BHARDWAJ & DR. JAYRAJ D. JADEJA</i>	78
13.	INCREASING WOMEN EMPLOYMENT IN IT INDUSTRY: AN ANALYSIS OF REASONS <i>S. ANNAPOORNA & S. T. BAGALKOTI</i>	87
14.	IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE, ROLE AMBIGUITY AND ROLE CONFLICT ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG THE FACULTY IN ENGINEERING COLLEGES <i>DR. T. G. VIJAYA & R. HEMAMALINI</i>	90
15.	PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM IN INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT: A CASE STUDY <i>DR. TEJ SINGH & DR. RAJIV RATAN</i>	95
16.	ROBUST AWARENESS ON INDIAN INSURANCE INDUSTRY IN TIER THREE CITIES <i>DR. T.V. MALICK, DR. V. SELVAM & N. ABDUL NAZAR</i>	101
17.	AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS OF E-BANKING CUSTOMERS IN CHHATTISGARH (INDIA) <i>A. K. CHANDRA & D. K. GANGESHWAR</i>	105
18.	COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PARAMETRIC AND NON-PARAMETRIC VALUE AT RISK (VaR) METHODS <i>VIKRANT VIKRAM SINGH, ANOOP MOHANTY & SUMIT GOYAL</i>	109
19.	A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMMES AT ONE OF THE NAVRATNA COMPANY IN ELECTRONIC INDUSTRY <i>DR. R. PADMAJA</i>	118
20.	IMPLEMENTATION OF CRM WITH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION <i>DR. NARINDER TANWAR</i>	125
21.	PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF SOFTWARE INDUSTRIES THROUGH VALUE ADDED APPROACH - AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON INFOSYS LTD. <i>DR. R. KRISHNAKUMAR</i>	129
22.	TECHNOLOGICAL SERVICES IN RURAL BANKING: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO BANK BRANCHES IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT <i>D. DEVANDHIRAN & SREEHARI .R</i>	133
23.	VICKS VAPORUB - MOTHER'S TOUCH THERAPY: A CASE STUDY <i>RAJNI KAMBOJ</i>	141
24.	THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCUS OF CONTROL AND ROLE STRESS AMONG ENGINEERS AND PERSONNEL <i>R. SUBASREE</i>	144
25.	THE LEGAL LACUNAS OF AN INDIAN CORPORATION'S CRIMINAL LIABILITY <i>DR. SHRUTI BEDI</i>	149
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK	154

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INCREASING WOMEN EMPLOYMENT IN IT INDUSTRY: AN ANALYSIS OF REASONS

S. ANNAPOORNA
RESEARCH SCHOLAR
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
KARNATAKA UNIVERSITY
DHARWAD

S. T. BAGALKOTI
PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
KARNATAKA UNIVERSITY
DHARWAD


ABSTRACT

Number of women employed in Indian IT industry is growing. Researchers found the industry's picturisation as 'gender neutral', social status, growth opportunities and lucrative salary are the attracting forces. NASSCOM reports and others found strong business case for employing women in the IT industry. This paper based on primary data explains the other reasons that are making more women to enter the IT industry. Due to emerging socio-cultural and industrial HR policies change, technical competence and confidence is increasing among women. Availability of career guidance at collages, Campus selection method, existence of working relatives in the same industry, presence of women member in the recruitment committee, recruitment of non-technical personnel by the companies and increasing social acceptance of the women as software professional are the other factors which are increasing proportion of women in the Indian IT workforce.

KEYWORDS

Women, IT, Software, NASSCOM, Employment.

INTRODUCTION

 ASSCOM Mercer(2008) reports increasing employment of women in the Indian IT industry from 421,460 in 2006 to 670,984 in 2008. During 90's the 20% of the total IT workforce was women, in the year 2010 NASSCOM-PWC(2010) reports it increased to 30% median. Som Mittal, NASSCOM Chairman, expected men-women ratio to reach 60:40 by 2010 in software segment and in ITES already it has crossed in favour of women i.e. 40:60. Number of women entering IT profession (Mallish, Ilavarasan and Vigneshwar (2009) rejects IT employeemes as professionals and consider them as workers) is increasing. According to NASSCOM-PWC (2010) women constitutes 37% median of the entry level workforce. Even if as Neetha(2009) and Gurumurthy(2003) found women employed in IT sector constitutes very small proportion of the overall employment of women, the study of women employment in IT industry is essential. Because inspite of IT industry in its nascent stage, considered to be important for women empowerment. According to Primo(2003), Pande(2004), Jimmy and Elias(2006) and Mitter(2003) women participation in terms of producer/employee is essential to get the power to influence and to avoid further marginalization due to 'digital-divide'. Contrary to the developed nations, in developing countries women employment in ICT industry is increasing. This paper tries to analyse the reasons for increasing employment of women in the IT industry.

OBJECTIVES

Main purpose of the present study is to analyze the reasons for increasing women employment in the IT industry with in that specially in software companies.

METHODOLOGY

Present study utilizes both primary and secondary resources. Primary data has been collected through structured questionnaires, which were directly distributed to software employees at Bangalore, Pune, Hyderabad and Hubli. 128 employees responded. Based on simple averages, analysis has been done. NASSCOM Reports, Journals were used as secondary resources.

REASONS FOR THE INCREASING NUMBER OF WOMEN

Basically there are two main reasons for increasing number of women in the IT industry. First, many women are aspiring for IT jobs and another is IT industry itself is realizing the strong business case for employing women.

a. Women are aspiring for IT job?

As Parikh and Sukhatme (2008) observed, number of women in engineering courses is increasing. Further most of them are opting for IT related courses. Mukherjee(2008), and Sucheta (2008) explained the reasons like; social status, branding of IT jobs as 'gender-neutral' and 'women-friendly', westernized work environment, lucrative salary etc. In India women basically work for two reasons. Women belonging to higher socio-economic strata work for 'social status' and women belonging to lower-middle economic strata work to support their families. IT industry provides both; economic power and social status. (Cautiously it has to be considered because with in IT industry, software and hardware sector carry higher social status but not the ITES-BPO jobs). Earlier proportion of women working for social status was more as Babu(2004 and 2008) found most of the women were not the prime-bread-earners for their family. But NASSCOM-PWC (2010) reports increasing proportion of prime-bread-earners among women IT employees now.

b. Business case for employing more women by IT Companies.

According to Som Mittal 'Gender Inclusivity' is not a CSR activity rather a business imperative and necessary for survival. Employing women is essential for IT companies to reduce the problem of 'talent crunch' and 'manpower shortage' that it is facing. Attrition being another serious threat, IT companies are considering women to be more loyal and stable. Nasscom-Mercer (2009) reports 17% attrition among women compared 19% for men. Further it explains the qualities of women that better suits the job which are now realized by the companies; leadership, motivational strength, empathy, emotional intelligence, management. Loyalty, less attrition, good communicators, strong team players, well-versed in multitasking. Cost advantage is another reason as Hafkin and Taggart(2001) finds "comparative wages of women in developing countries were one-sixth to one-twentieth of those for women in developed countries". More women in the workforce helps companies to build their brand image, to understand consumer needs better and increased profitability as observed by McKinsey(2008) in terms of higher return on equity, higher return to share-holder value and higher operating margins.

FINDINGS

Along with the above cited reasons, over the time period due to the changes found in social, structural and industries HR policies additional factors due to which women employment in IT industry is increasing are observed. They are as follows,

1. INCREASING CONFIDENCE ABOUT THEIR TECHNICAL COMPETENCE AMONG WOMEN

In European countries inspite of SET (Science, Engineering and Technology) degrees most of the women hesitated to enter the SET profession due to the lack of confidence about their technical capability. Increased unemployment among women engineers was the observed phenomenon even in India. But as showed in Table-1, out of 128 respondents 78.12% said that they themselves opt for their profession compared to 21.88% who didn't. Even today women's jobs are decided by their family and not by themselves. But as 78.12% said that 'it was their decision to enter the job', represents increasing 'job consciousnesses' and 'confidence about their technical ability'.

TABLE-1 DECISION ABOUT THE JOB

Decision about the profession	Female
Self	100(78.12%)
Others	28(21.88%)
Total	128

Source: Primary survey

2. AVAILABILITY OF PROPER CAREER GUIDANCE

'Finding first job' is the main difficulty of women engineers according to Parikh and Sukhatme (2008). But now most of the 'Technical' and even 'non-Technical' education centers have opened their own career guidance cell and placement sections. Due to the persistent barrier for women's networking ability and lack of mobility they are able to get necessary information about the employment opportunities and links through these cells. Table -2 explains that nearly 69% of the respondents were benefitted by their College Career Guidance Cell.

TABLE-2 AVAILABILITY OF CAREER GUIDANCE AT COLLEGE

Career guidance at College	Female
Available	88(68.75%)
Not available	39(30.47%)
Total	128

Source: Primary survey

3. CAMPUS SELECTION METHOD

As Vasavi and Upadhyaya (2008) explain four important methods for recruitment practiced by IT Companies. They are, Campus Selection, Employee Referral, Open Advertisement and Direct Interview. Primary analysis of the respondents about their method used to get the first job in table-3 show more bias in terms of campus selection as the proportion is 46.09%. Hence through 'campus selection' Companies themselves approach the women. Once through this method they enter their 'first job', opting for another through other methods is not difficult as they will have some 'network' by the time and even their parents will get confidence about their daughters job and safety.

TABLE-3 RECRUITMENT METHOD THROUGH WHICH WOMEN GOT THEIR FIRST JOB

First mode of recruitment	Female
1. Campus Selection	59(46.09%)
2. Employee Referral	12(9.38%)
3. Open Advertisement	22(17.19%)
4. Direct Interview	35(27.34%)
Total	128

Source: Primary survey

4. PRESENCE OF WORKING RELATIVES/FRIENDS IN THE SAME INDUSTRY

One of the Head of the IT courses of a well known Engineering collage while doing our survey expressed that 'to enter and sustain' in the IT profession women require working relatives in the same field. The logic can be traced as it gives them networking ability which can be used to enter the profession through 'Employee Referral method'. And another advantage for their first employment parents and family members will feel relaxed to send their daughters to distant places if they find already existing working relative in the same place. Their perception about the statement is negative as in table-4, 92% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that 'for women to enter and sustain in the industry, relatives working in the same industry is necessary'. But practically, nearly 60% of the respondents had working relatives.

TABLE-4 RELATIVES AND ENTRY TO THE IT INDUSTRY

Is this Necessary to have relatives?	Female
Yes	06(4.69%)
No	118(92.19%)
Total	128
Do you have Relatives in the IT field?	Female
Yes	74(57.81%)
No	53(41.41%)
Total	128

Source: Primary survey

5. PRESENCE OF WOMEN MEMBER IN THE RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE

Parikh and Sukhatme (2008) recommended 'the presence of women members in the recruitment committees'. IT industry images itself as gender-neutral and IT employees reluctant to consider any aspect in terms of gender influence. Still as a 'Gender inclusivity' measure many companies have appointed women members in the recruitment committees. Does it have any positive impact on the fresh entrants? For this nearly 60% of the respondents accepted that there was a woman member in the Recruitment committee. But whether it helped them or not only 20 (15%) respondents replied that they were benefitted by a woman's presence in the RC. Even if in percentage terms 15% is not a considerable impact but neither it is possible to neglect.

6. RECRUITMENT OF NON-TECHNICAL PERSONNEL

Earlier companies for recruitment concentrated only on technical degree holders and IIT and IIM students. Till date number of women students is negligible in IIT's and IIM's and REC's (Parikh and Sukhatme, 2008). As their 'personnel' requirement increased, companies widened their scope to tier-2 and tier-3 cities where most of the women students are concentrated. When even that couldn't suffice their requirement, they started employing personnel with any formal education who can be easily trained for the industry requirement based on their reasoning and logical ability. This phenomenon worked out positively for women who are concentrated in social sciences and humanities.

In the present analysis Table-5 shows that 68.75% of the respondents had 'Technical education', 7.81% had the 'professional education' and 18.75% were formal graduates and postgraduates. Company's policy of recruiting non-technical personnel enlarged the number of women employees in the industry.

TABLE-5 QUALIFICATION OF THE WOMEN EMPLOYED IN IT

Qualification	Female
I. Technical: B.E, B.Tech,M.E, M.Tech, MCA, PGDCA, BCA,BCS,Dip	88(68.75%)
II. Professional: B.F.A., BBA, MBA, BBM	10(7.81%)
III. Others: B.A., B.Com., B.Sc., M.Com., M.Sc., M.A., P.U.	24(18.75%)

Source: Primary survey

7. INCREASING SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE' OF WOMEN AS IT EMPLOYEE

'Social status' is already observed reason by researchers. But along with that 'increasing social acceptance' of women as IT employee is reducing the socio-cultural barriers and providing them supportive environment in family and society. 83% of respondents agreed that their profession has given them a social status. And 95% of the respondents said that their families are supportive to them. Obviously this social acceptance will allow parents to help their daughters to study IT courses and join IT sector. But this 'social acceptance' cannot be taken with all IT industry jobs. ITES jobs still are not acceptable in the middle-class societies. And some researchers found that due to their BPO jobs some of the women are not finding matches. Further in spite of being selected in the campus selection many parents are not allowing their daughters to join.

CONCLUSION

In Indian IT industry already 'gender bias' is witnessed and there is a concentration of women at the lower level. Industry people attribute lesser number of women in the industry as a reason for their less representation in the top positions. As IT industry still in its nascent stage and as it matures with more number of women employees, influence of women can be expected to increase and stereotypical gender roles may start changing. As Salaas and Accesso(2005) says 'number matters' Hence it is necessary to increase the number of women in the industry at first instance.

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