

Family Friendly Policies in Information Technology Sector

*Dr.M.Neeraja Venkat

**M.Mohanlakshmi

*Worked as an Assistant professor, Dept.of Business Administration, Sridevi women's engineering college, Hyderabad

**Assistant Professor, Dept. of Computer Applications, Sri Kalahastiswara Institute of Information & Management Sciences(SKIIMS), Srikalahasti, Tirupati..

Abstract:

Family friendly policies (FFPs) are designed to help employees co-manage work and personal obligations. Even though family friendly policies are not gender bias, generally female employees are more affected by it as they try to juggle work, home and the family. Constituting nearly more than half of the labor force, Indian women, as the traditional caregivers in Indian society sometimes face the issue of balancing work and life which is quick becoming a major concern among most dual career families. As a result of this phenomenon, family friendly policies at the work place are becoming a challenge for the employers to provide. The purpose of this study is to assess how family friendly are some of the Information Technology (IT) work places in Hyderabad, a major IT hub in India. The more common modes of family friendly policies were identified based on focus group discussion. This study concentrates more on family friendly policies in terms of work time flexibility. It further sets out to investigate the opinion of employees on how interested are the employees with regards to some of the modes of family friendly policies offered by the employers. Finally, the paper concludes with discussions on the implications of family friendly policies on work life balance. The study shows that there are many IT companies in India which have implemented various family friendly policies but there still exists a gap between employee's practical needs and the availability of family friendly policies.

Keywords: Family Friendly Policies, Flexible working Arrangements, Work life balance

Introduction

The phrase "family friendly policy" (FFP) has increasingly become a popular issue of discussion and of particular interest especially among female employees. Flexible work arrangements such as flexi time, job sharing, work sharing; home working, term time, variable working hours, annualized hours, compressed working week, part time work, teal working and voluntary reduced hours have been widely practiced in developed countries for several decades.

In the Post 1990s, Changes in industrial policy of India fueled rapid increase in the various sectors in all verticals. Among those, Information Technology (IT) industry is the one which has grown at a massive rate from a mere US \$ 150 million in 1991-92 to a staggering US \$ 5.7 billion (including over \$4 billion worth of software exports) in 1999-2000. No other Indian industry has performed this well against the global competition. In terms of its share of GDP, the IT industry figures have risen from 0.59 percent in 1994-95 to 3.15%, 5.2 % ,7.5 % in FY03 ,FY07 ,FY08 respectively (Figure 1-fig 1.3,fig1.4) and demonstrated by virtue of IT industry Foreign Exchange earning being the # 2 contributor to Indian Foreign Exchange reserves and comfortable balance of payment position (Figure 1-fig1.1,fig1.2).

Fig.1 Growth of the IT market in India

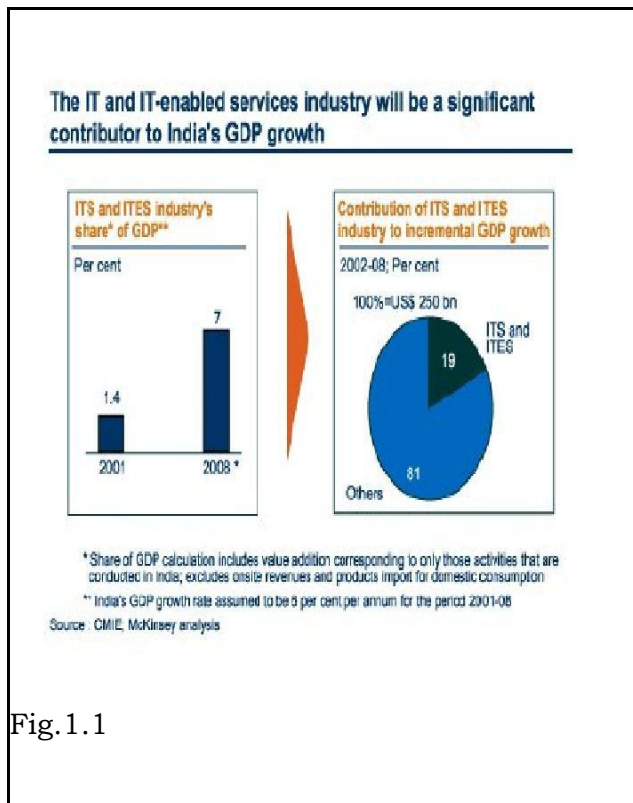


Fig.1.1

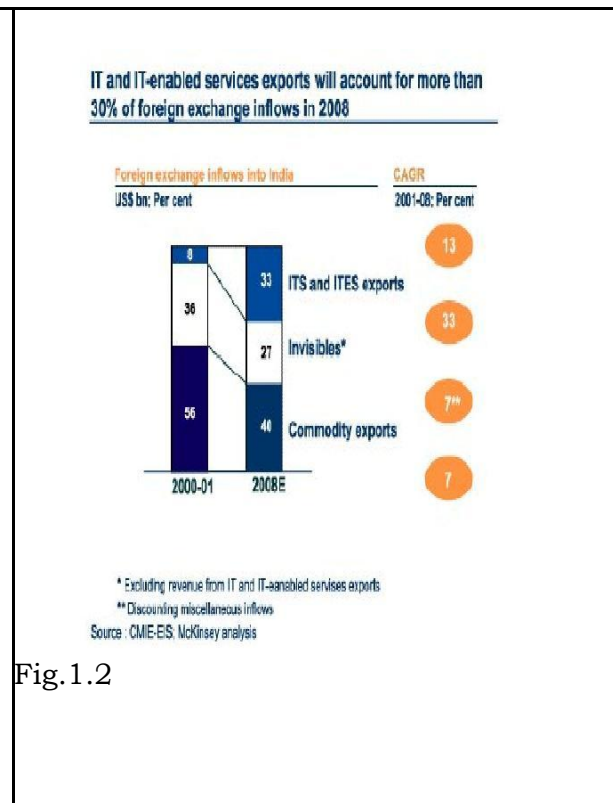


Fig.1.2

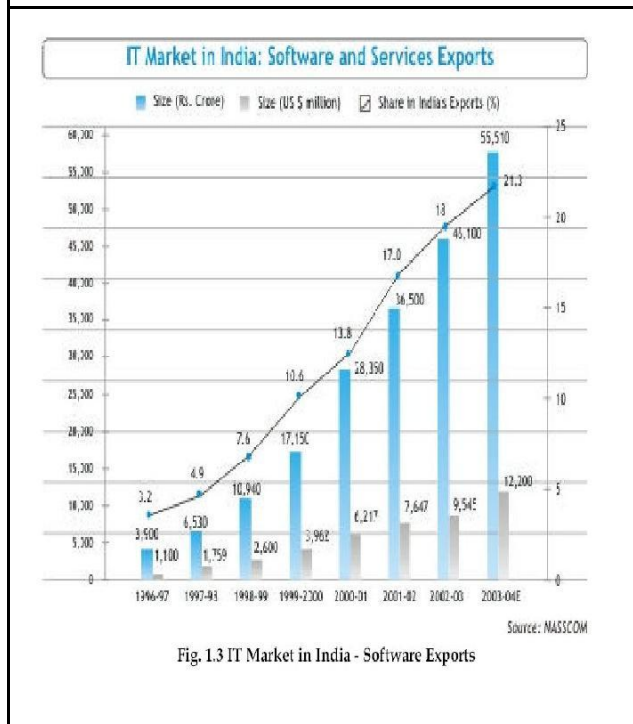


Fig. 1.3 IT Market in India - Software Exports

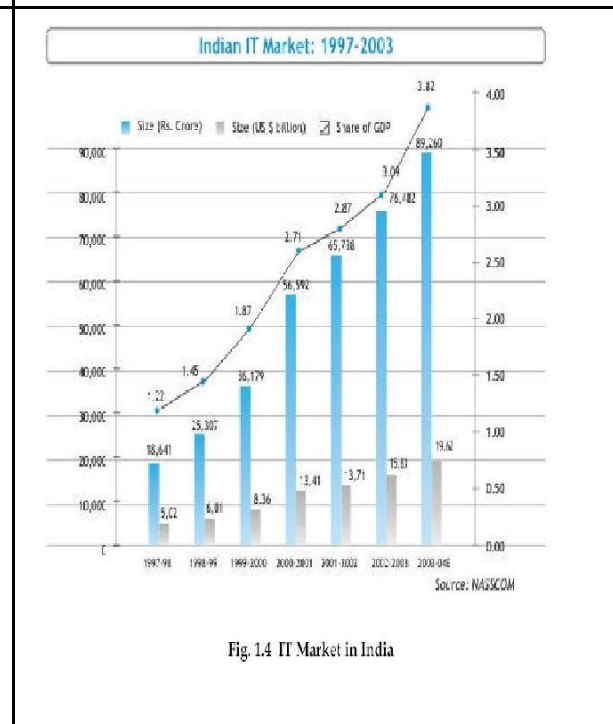
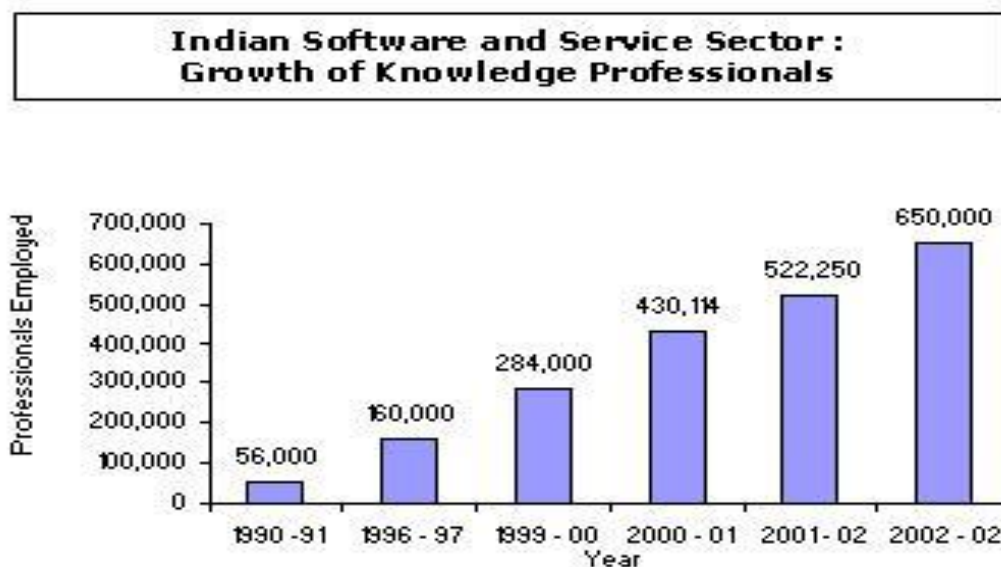


Fig. 1.4 IT Market in India

Employment in IT Industry: In recent times, ‘software development and IT enabled services’ have emerged as a niche opportunity for India in the global context.

According to industry sources, there were only 6,800 knowledge workers in 1985-86, the number increased to 2, 80,000 in 1998- 99 to 522,000 software and service professionals by the end of 2001-2002. It is estimated that out of these 522,000 knowledge workers, almost 170,000 work in the IT software and services export industry; nearly 106,000 work in the IT enabled services and over 220,000 in user organizations. It is estimated that the industry may employ 2.2m people by 2008, including half a million undertaking IT-enabled back office and call centre work outsourced from the West (Figure-2).

Fig.2 Indian Software and Service Sector: Growth of Knowledge Professionals



Indian IT Sector: Knowledge Professionals Employed

Category	1990-91	1996-97	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02 E
Software exports sector			110,000	162,000	170,000
Software domestic sector			17,000	20,000	22,000
Software-captive in user organizations			115,000	178,114	224,250
IT enabled services			42,000	70,000	106,000
Total	156,000	160,000	284,000	430,114	522,250

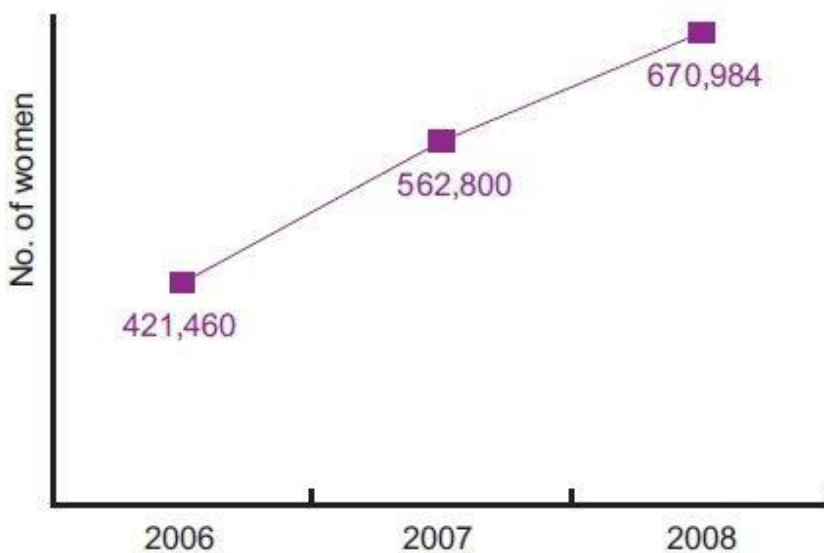
Source: Nasscom

Women in IT Sector

The IT Industry has been one of the most dynamic industries in India. This is attributed to their highly skilled IT workforce, and their ability to speak English. As an industry, IT provides promising opportunities for the economic and personal advancement of everyone, including the women.

The current trend in employment of women in Information and Communication Technology work arena is with a gender ratio (female: male) varying from a best level of 1:3 to the least level of 1:7 in major organizations, with exceptions, up to 1:19 in few organizations (Rajalakshmi.R 2003). The growth of information technology in the country during the last two decades has opened up a plethora of opportunities which saw growing number of women take up employment in the IT industry. According to NASSCOM, by the end of the decade, women will account for 45% of the country’s total workforce as compared to 14% in 2003²³.

Chart 1: Women in the IT workforce



Source: Mercer - NASSCOM Gender Inclusivity: Building Empowered Organisations study 2008

The Indian IT sector grew through the 1990s at a compound annual rate of more than 50% so that an industry worth about \$175m in 1989/90 had come to be worth \$5.7bn ten years later. About 70% of the software industry's earnings come from exports. North America is the most important export market, representing approximately two-thirds of all exports; over a third of US Fortune 500 companies now use India for outsourcing. Europe is in second place, with slightly less than a quarter of all exports. Instrumental for this success is the Software Technology Parks (STP) of India initiative. Biggest IT companies in India are Infosys Ltd, Wipro Technologies Limited, Satyam Computer Services Ltd., and Tata Consultancy Services. Companies whose corporate headquarters are located outside India, but have significant India-centric delivery capabilities include Accenture, Cognizant, HP, IBM and Perot.

Women have entered high skilled jobs in information technology in developing countries. This has happened particularly in countries where national policies have promoted science and technology education and where young women entered these fields. In India, the participation of women in engineering was negligible till the early 1980s. It is only since the 90s that their enrolment has shown an increasing trend. India has more than 250 universities (over 900 colleges) and engineering colleges providing computer education at the degree/diploma level. Two extensive studies on

women engineers were taken up at IIT Bombay, sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology. It was found that, from 1951 to 2001, i.e., over 50 years, there was nearly a 50 fold increase in the intake capacity. The growth in the capacity was particularly large in the past two decades mainly due to increasing number of private institutions started in this period. This trend is a sure sign of growing literacy amongst women and the valuable role they will play as major contributors in the economic growth outside the family.

Despite the availability of training manpower, a demand supply gap still exists in the IT manpower market. If India's IT software and services sector is to achieve annual revenue of US\$ 70-80 billion in 2008, it will have to educate at least 2 million additional knowledge workers over the next 8 years. IT sector has young workforce. In India women comprise 14 % of IT industry and 26% of business processing out sourcing BPO work force. The total work force and IT & BPO is made up of approximately 70 million people (<http://www.ciol.com>). At the lower experience level (about 3 years), about 19% of the workforce comprises women. At senior levels, women constitute less than 6% of the workforce (<http://www.dqindia.com>).

The overall median age of software professionals was about 25.6 years. By 2010 women will account for almost 50 percent of the total IT workforce in India. Women have thus come to play a major role in the growth of Information technology industry.

Practices of Organizations

Several organizations have started addressing the challenge of gender diversity to receive a winning edge in this competitive world. IBM, Intel and Infosys conduct forums internally to encourage their women employees to develop leadership abilities and aim higher. The Indus entrepreneurs (TiE), the industry body that encourages entrepreneurship, started a women's forum to encourage the start up culture among women techies. The practices of different organisations are described here.

IBM

IBM has a formal mentoring program, and it just doesn't exist as a document. Around 70% of our employees have already undergone various sensitization programs. IBM, a pioneer in women-friendly policies, has a platform named "I connect," along with numerous others that aim at helping women employees realize their full potential within the work environment. Says Kalpana Margabandhu, Director, Application and Integration Middleware Division, IBM India Software Lab

"We believe these key programs provide a foundation for our women, and our ultimate measurement is for women employees, particularly working mothers, to aspire for both an executive life and a family. Our goal is to be the premier global employer for women."

IBM has a 3-tier system, which helps women stay connected to their companies during their time-off and also provides them counselling and training sessions after they join again. The IWLC (IBM Women's Leadership Council) Project aims to provide a platform for women who have taken a break in their career, to come back to the workplace. According to Kalpana, the initiative helped create an additional channel to attract qualified women professionals to IBM." Seema Ajwani, GM, Workforce Relations, IBM Daksh, observed that there has been a significant rise in the number of women returning after a sabbatical. When asked the reasons, she puts it rather simply. "It's all about acceptance and organizational support."

IBM as its work life balance initiatives is sponsoring "Fun and learn" activities for its employees and their children. During April and May, 2002 is sponsored the "Young explorers summer camp" at the genie kid centre. IBM also opened a first –of a kind

child care centre during the launch of \$ 50mn global work life fund .It is a partnership between IBM and “Your Kids R Our Kids” –a preschool and day care centre recognized by the Indian Ministry of Elementary Education .The IBM Global work- life fund is a \$ 50 mn launched in the year 2000 by Ted Childs, VP,IBM Global work force diversity .The fund addresses a variety of work /life issues and focuses on dependent care programs that help employees and their communities respond to the child and elder care responsibilities.

Intel

According to R Anish of Intel, “Intel supports and provides employees with the flexibility needed to balance their work and personal lives. Working mothers are encouraged to approach their managers for flexible working hours. All employees are provided with laptops and can seek broadband connections to enable telecommuting options. In addition, Intel has staggered working hours and part-time work hours to make return-to-work and working easy at Intel. In the recent organizational health survey conducted by the organization, flexibility was a parameter that women employees rated very high. To tackle constraints women experience when they start a family, different possibilities are explored, from standardized crèches to flexi working hours. Says R Anish, director, HR, Intel South Asia,

“Diversity at Intel is a series of initiatives focused on recruitment, development and retention of our workforce.”

Pepsico

It enjoys the fame of being one of the top places of work for women due to its employee –friendly policies which offer ample opportunities for striking a work life balance and absence of any form of discrimination. Pepsi has formulated several policies which aim at handling the issues of diversity, which include:

Multi –year strategic plans for diversity with goals like diverse recruitment, and for fostering an inclusive culture and improved retention.

External Diversity advisory boards consisting of luminaries from different strata of the society such as educationalists, politicians, practitioners, etc. for rendering their advisory support on a variety of diversity issues

Annual employee performance reviews for attaining diversity related goals by all the managers. Bi-annual organisational health survey on diversity issues, which covers minority and the female employees of the organization. Mentoring and employee networking Corporate sponsored multi -level program for training employees to adapt to diverse environment.

Tata Group

Tata introduced a Second Career Internship Program (SCIP) for women professionals who preferred opting for a career break and wish to get back to their profession. The entire endeavour involves an experimental pedagogy as the company provides a live project to a woman based on her domain expertise and interest for tenure of 5-6 months of a total duration of approximately 500 hours. During this period, the women professional may perform on a flexi time basis and the guide and the trainee explore their mutual interests and along with that the trainee may also earn a lucrative stipend to the tune of Rs.4 lakh even.

William –Sonoma Inc

William –Sonoma offers its employees a privilege of reduced work schedule once the female professional returns from the maternity leave under their phased return program provisions. This program aims at maximising employee retention by taking

care of the pressure of the new working mothers which they confront due to the early months of bonding, lack of sleep and difficult feeding schedules. These programs also explore the possibility of part time arrangements and normally reduce the working schedules by 50% in the initial two months based on mutual agreement.

Deloitte and touché and LLC

These organizations are the main champions of Alumni Networking and Consulting Programs (ANCP) and Mass Career Customization Programs (MCCP) for the employees. Through alumni networking, these companies maintain close contact with the employee who prefer to leave their career for concentrating on their personal pursuits for a certain period of time

These companies maintain a link with such employees by keeping their mailing accounts active, inviting them to attend the corporate parties and events, providing them an access to free training for keeping their skills fresh and providing part time or consulting opportunities. This initiative helps improve organization's ability in retaining its valuable and talented pool of human resources. Through the mass career customization module, the organizations work in conjunction with the employees by understanding their custom career goals on the basis of career advancement, place role and schedule and help them out for working in tune with the custom career path.

Best Buy

Best buy championed the Results Oriented Work Environment s (ROWE) program, in which the employees get ample autonomy for handling their work requirements as they are allowed freely to decide how, when and where they can get their job done. This initiative tackled the problem of employee discontentment due to work-life imbalance issues and cases of repression from the management through excessive control.

CSC India

This organization offers utmost freedom and flexibility to its women professionals at work due to which there has been an impressive rise in the number of female workforce. The company has also introduced an exclusive website for women professionals known as planet W. The site serves as a forum for exchanging ideas and sharing the problems of diversity. Moreover the organization also provides different courses on dieting and personal grooming for improving the lifestyle of the female workforce.

Zensar Technologies

Zensar Technologies has reinvented employee relation function. Employee relations executives have been made responsible to address all stated and unstated employee issues and concerns ranging from hygiene issues to global alignment and on boarding concerns. The company has launched a round –the –clock employee help desk system called Ecare with the purpose of providing global support for all HR and finance related issues for the employees across locations .It has also started a women of excellence(WE) forum to foster leadership among its women employees.

Accenture

Accenture has adopted several initiatives and policies to support its women employees. One unique program is the Kids –At –Work day. Here employees are encouraged to bring their kids and families and enjoy events organized by the company .There are programs to manage or lead a diverse workforce at senior levels. In addition, there are educational and training initiatives that seek to sensitize employees about gender differences. Specific examples include: road shows to educate

employees on Accenture policies on discrimination and harassment; establishing employee-led clubs to organize sports initiatives such as self defense skills; sessions conducted by external speakers on a variety of issues relevant to women—including work-life balance, leadership and assertiveness.

According to Rekha Menon, Executive Vice President, India Geographic Services & Human Capital & Diversity, Accenture, the commitment to building, maintaining and expanding an inclusive culture is central to Accenture’s ongoing success. For Accenture, gender diversity begins at the recruitment stage itself. Rekha menon explained as follows

“Accenture has a focused recruitment campaign designed to attract women employees. The campaign includes a metrics-based recruitment process, a referral programme, a strong connection with colleges dedicated to providing women education, a tailored advertising campaign and weekend recruitment events,” At the same time, the company has evolved several policies which have enabled it to emerge as a gender inclusive enterprise, such as the following Global flexible work arrangement.

Maternity Returners Programme, which helps ease the transition for new parents back into the workforce by providing career guidance and support for finding ideal re-entry roles

Child Care centers

Vaahini, a formal community of all women employees where they can share experiences and create opportunities to learn and grow, a women networking portal Gender Sensitization training for supervisors and counselors to help them understand and appreciate diversity and engage and manage employees successfully.

The industry addresses the stress issue with great openness .There are variety of ways in which stress is handled, meditation, yoga, counselling and “walk –in” policies that allow employees easy access to their seniors at any given time to discuss their problems .These measures relieve employees immediately from their work related stress and give them a support and a sense of belonging.

Cisco

At Cisco, it is the women’s Action Network (WAN) which cultivates mentoring and career development opportunities for women. “Networking helps women find a sense of community; Wan is a forum that allows employees to expand communities. Every week the members are involved in volunteering and outreach activities,” as quoted by Tracy Ann Curtis, Operations manager, Asia Pacific Diversity –India, Cisco.

The IT and ITES sector supports its women employees in terms of onsite facilities, good nutritional guidance and ensures that good working atmosphere is maintained .To address the issue of safety for women working in night shifts, employers check the background of cab drivers and ensure that the first person picked up and last person dropped home is not a woman. Some are even putting in GPS tracking devices in their vehicles to monitor their location and movements. At Cisco, women are being provided flexibility at various stages of their careers. While maternity leave and leave of absence are available, the company also allows employees to make a gradual transition instead of being in a binary “at work” or “off work” situation. Referred to as “on-ramp” and “off-ramp,” women employees who are “on-ramp” can focus aggressively on their careers while opting to “off-ramp” when required by reducing workloads. At the same time, Cisco has crafted employee friendly policies like flexi-time, working from home, etc. for all employees, which are supported by high technologies capabilities such as

network connectivity, laptops, VoIP, among others, available from home. The company has created a level playing field where all employees, irrespective of gender share the same facilities. At Cisco, building women leaders is about offering these employees numerous training and development opportunities. The vibrant Women's Action Network (WAN) – a volunteer employee network within the company – empowers all levels of women to develop influencing and leadership skills that support their career growth. At the same time, Women's Leadership Development programmes are also being run for women across APAC and at a corporate level, and employees are being regularly exposed to women role models, to understand some of the leadership challenges that they may have faced. Mentoring, mentoring circles and coaching are the other key pillars of Cisco's gender inclusivity drive and have enabled the company to improve the percentage of women on its rolls year-after-year.

Satyam

Satyam has introduced a range of policies that cater to the specific requirements of women and enable them to take on leadership roles. Extended maternity leave (including adoption leave), paternity leave, escorted drop for women after extended hours at work, a transit policy (for women traveling alone) and showcasing "Role Models" to encourage younger women to aspire for leadership positions are some of the steps that the organization has taken over the past few years to remain diverse and gender inclusive.

Aricent

Aricent believe that gender inclusivity is crucial to attracting and retaining the right talent, which further contributes to a healthy work environment within the enterprise.

Aricent's goal is to remain flexible and supportive when it comes to meeting the needs of employees, including both men and women. The company has focused its energies on providing an ethical and safe workplace with a non-discriminatory work culture. This ensures that the company attracts and retains the right talent among women as well. The open work culture and initiatives such as the "Flexible working hours" allows women employees to balance their work life. Aricent has a formal ethical code of conduct to prevent and address any kind of harassment related issues as well. Women in senior positions also serve as positive role models for other employees.

Copal Partners

For Copal Partners, gender diversity is about being intolerant to sexual harassment or gender discrimination, having an egalitarian compensation policy, ensuring that the recognition and growth are based on merit, providing security to female employees and promoting gender-fair language within the company. At Copal Partners women employees, who form 35 per cent of the workforce are encouraged to have a greater sense of the extraordinary challenges of leadership. They are invited to think creatively about how they can chart out a growth path for themselves within the organization.

Future Outlook

Som Mittal, President, NASSCOM asserted that the future belongs to gender mainstreaming.

"Indian companies no longer view gender inclusivity as a Corporate Social Responsibility activity, but as a business imperative. That's because in 2007-08, the IT industry had 28 per cent women in its workforce compared to 24 per cent in 2005-06. At the entry level, in 2005-06, 38 per cent were women compared to 47 per cent in 2007-08. Two years ago, only four companies had formal defined policies for gender

diversity and this year, the number has risen to 80.

Additionally, a survey of 50 companies has revealed that women account for 11 per cent of the leadership roles in senior management”.

Increasing recognition

Commenting on the existing scenario, Joel Perlman, President & Co-founder, Copal Partners says:

There is a growing acceptance within companies that gender inclusivity leads to more diverse, open and innovative organizations.

The following observations are supportive of the above view.

Tracy Ann Curtis, Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer, APAC, Cisco Systems agrees, that having an inclusive and diverse culture is imperative for any global company, as it leads to employee engagement, fosters innovation and brings in a wealth of ideas, innovation and energy into the organization.

The focus on women by the IT-BPO industry is in part an acknowledgment of their growing role in India's economy. Analysts state that there is a direct correlation between the employment of women and the economic well being of a nation.

Women bring with them their unique and commanding brand of leadership. They bring distinct personality and motivational strengths to leadership roles. They seamlessly bring on board, qualities like empathy and emotional intelligence in their decision-making process. Women learn to manage conflict as an intrinsic skill. Recognizing the growing influence of women power, IT-BPO organizations have been gearing up to catalyze their growth and provide them with rewarding careers (News line, November, 2008). There are still a large number of areas where women-friendly policies and facilities simply do not exist, a fact that can greatly deter women from entering or staying on in the IT-BPO industry. At the same time, not enough women employees have reached the top rungs of the corporate ladder and there are even fewer in the boardroom.

The NASSCOM agenda

Recognizing the need for gender inclusivity at all levels in the IT-BPO industry in order to realize the projections for growth in the coming years, NASSCOM has launched an initiative with the following objectives:

Benchmark the participation of women in IT: Study how global companies in IT and related industries have benefited by having more women leaders in their organizations.

Sensitive senior management and policy makers in the IT-BPO industry on gender inclusivity and women friendly policies and share best practices in this area

Highlight the success stories of companies that have brought more women in to their corporate leadership.

Equip women with insights, training and mentoring on necessary skills to gear up and achieve their leadership aspirations. Additionally, NASSCOM in conducting the following programmes and initiatives towards this objective Focused website subgroups Study and research programmes WIL-IT networking activities in various cities like –Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai and Hyderabad.

Setting up gender inclusivity programmes in organizations Mentoring circle.

Gender inclusivity awards NASSCOM 2008

NASSCOM has announced the winners of its gender inclusivity awards for

2008. These awards, in the second year now, honor companies in the IT-BPO industry which have implemented outstanding practices that promote gender empowerment and women leadership development. The awards recognize efforts made by the company through policies, procedures and systems to foster inclusivity and innovative programmes which are targeted at strengthening gender inclusivity at the workplace. The recipients of the awards for the year 2008 are:

NASSCOM Corporate Award for Excellence in gender inclusivity: IT services and product companies –Infosys technologies.

NASSCOM Corporate Award for Excellence in gender inclusivity: IBM Daksh Business process services

NASSCOM Corporate Award for Excellence in gender inclusivity: Most innovative project in gender inclusivity-IBM India pvt Ltd, NASSCOM Corporate Award for Excellence in gender inclusivity: Best emerging company-Ajuba solutions India Pvt .Limited and ADP Private Limited.

The NASSCOM IT women Leadership Summit’, now in its third year running was conceptualized to provide an unmatched networking community, insight into non-conventional growth leaders in organizations, and effective training in skills and competencies for IT and BPO women professionals. The experience is designed to empower these professionals more forward in their careers and achieve leadership positions in their respective organizations. The discussion in the summit and the forum also highlights the policies and best practices that promote gender inclusivity in the IT-BPO workforce and provide answers to questions like:

What are the strategies for creating more women leaders?

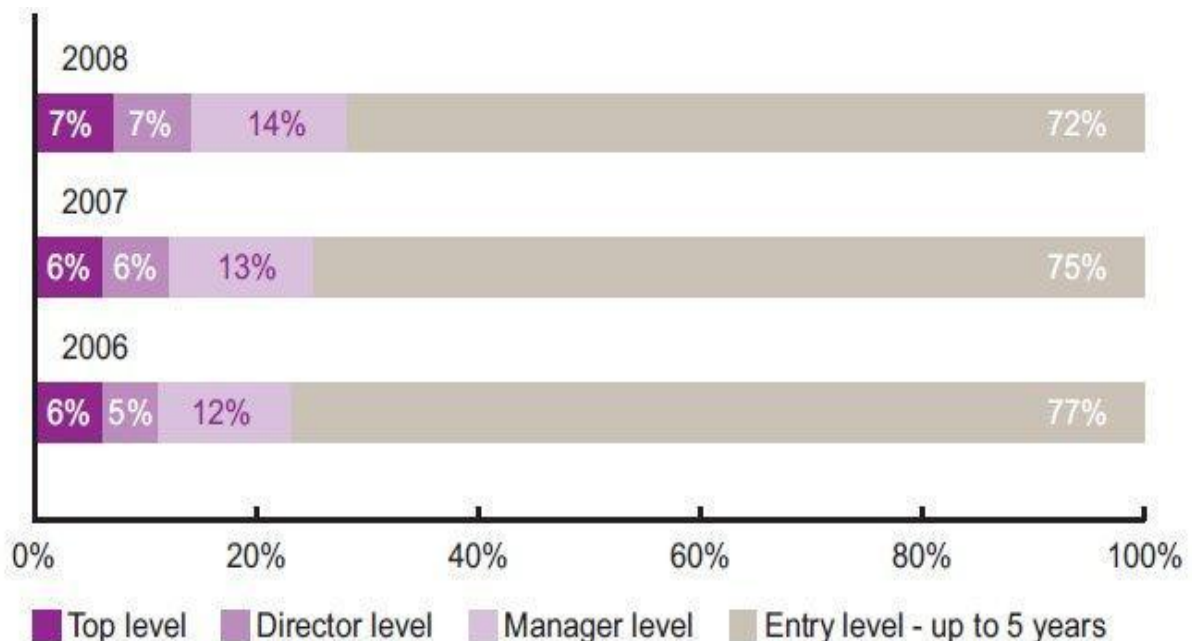
Why successful enterprises create and support women’s networks?

How aspiring women leaders can equip themselves to reach the top positions?

Focus of Research

The increase in the percentage of women in IT over past years is equally encouraging .However, the crux of problem remains: while women are well represented in entry level roles, they drop out from workforce as they start to progress through the ranks. (Chart 2)

Chart-2 Percentage of female employees by career level



Source: Mercer - NASSCOM Gender Inclusivity: Building Empowered Organisations study 2008

Few companies (As shown in below table) have specific HR policies to help women balance out the contradictory pulls between the home and the work place. Consequently most women techies have to give up a minimum of three years of their professional life once they chose to have children. And three years is equivalent to a lifetime in the tech industry, where obsolescence sets in every three months.

Table 1: Family Friendly Measures

S.No	Company	Measures
1	IBM	I connect IWLC,YESC
2	Intel	Flexi Hours, Reduced work
3	Pepsi	Diversity Advisory board
4	Tata	SCIP(Second career internship program)
5	William- Sonoma	Part time, reduced work schedules
6	Deloitte,Llc OA	ANCP,MOCP
7	Best buy	ROWE program me
8	Cisco	Planetary W, Life style training
9	Zensar Technologies	E care, Women of Excellence
10	Accenture	Kids at work, Global flexi work arrangement, Child care centre, Maternity Returners programme, Vaahini ,Gender sensitization program me

While many studies have shown that this non-conventional mode of employment can benefit employers and employees (See for example Mccann, 2004; Hill,

Martinson ET. al. 2004, Warne & Holland, 1999), this mode of employment is still very new and not very common in India. According to Cox (1997) the participation of women in mainstream economics is evidenced by the demand for domestic help to do household task. Nevertheless, the pattern of women and male participation can vary according to cultural differences across the globe (Jones 1998).

This study which is based on a primary survey, first tries to assess how family friendly are some of the IT work places in Hyderabad, a major IT Hub in India. The more common modes of family friendly policies are identified based on focus group discussion undertaken in 2010. Family friendly policies can be in the form of workplace flexibility or work time flexibility. This study however, concentrates more on family friendly policies in terms of work time flexibility as this many employees are interested in this form of FFP. It further sets out to investigate how interested are the employees with regards to some of the modes of family friendly policies offered by the employers. Finally, the paper concludes with discussions on possible challenges faced by the employer and implications and benefits the employees get from a more family friendly workplace.

Literature Review

Studies have shown that an organization which values its employees and recognizes the importance of work life balance stands to win in terms of staff morale and commitment (Nadeem & Hendry, 2003; Liddicott, 2003). FFPs such as flexi time if used with quality practices at the work place can actually become the core of human resource management and lead to good work performance and higher productivity (de Menezes, L.M. & Wood, S. (2006); Irene Hau S.C & Irene Chew K.H. (2006)). As argued by Liechty & Anderson (2007), FFPs are beneficial for both employers and employees and now highly valued by parents who have their own children working under some working arrangements.

There are several approaches and models to define "labour flexibility", depending on the different work, social and personal variables/parameters/perspectives one may take into account. Goudswaard and De Nanteuil (2000) emphasise that "flexibility emerges as a heterogeneous concept, mixing two series of variables, quantitative/qualitative and external/internal, with consequent several possible combinations", which include "numerical flexibility" (e.g. permanent/temporal contracts, work on demand), "geographical flexibility" (e.g. subcontracting, outsourcing), "functional flexibility" (e.g. job enrichment, team work, project groups), and "temporal flexibility" (e.g. night and shift work, part-time, overtime, compressed work week).

Hakansson, Dahlin-Ivanoff, and Sonn (2006) in their focus group study of 19 women, who had experienced stress-related disorder, showed that meaningful occupation is desirous for people to achieve balance in everyday life. Matuska and Erickson (2008) note that women realize the importance to avoid stress due to its link to health and place a great emphasis on achieving a balance between work and rest, leisure activities and time for self as means for a balanced lifestyle. Matuska and Christiansen (2006) reviewed four approaches to understand lifestyle balance-- time use, life roles, need satisfaction and biological rhythms and their influences on behavior. Matuska and Christiansen (2008) assert that sustained patterns of occupation that meet biological and psychological needs within the individual's environments can lead to reduced stress, improved health and well-being, and greater life satisfaction.

The search for ways and methods suitable for increasing the flexibility of the working

systems and, in particular, of working times can include several different interventions both in short and long-term periods according to the temporal scales that one may consider. In practical they can deal with: (a) increasing working hours with higher salary (e.g. daily or weekly overtime, delayed retirement); (b) re-arrangement of the same amount of working hours (e.g. variable start and finishing times, compressed work week, annual bank of hours); (c) reduction of working hours at the same level of salary (e.g. bank of paid leaves, week-end work, early retirement); (d) reduction of working hours with reduced salary (e.g. horizontal and vertical part-time, job sharing); and (e) reduction of working hours with transfer of costs to the community (solidarity contracts, pre-term retirement).

The type of intervention depends on the prevailing factors that are present at different times which influence political choices in work and social organization. In the short-term, for example, one may expect that work hours may be altered for limited periods in terms of increased or decreased hours worked per day or week and/or changed position of work hours in order to cope with increasing temporal (seasonal, peak hours, just-in-time production) demands for goods and services, as well as to reduce production costs. In the long-term, the interventions are linked to more complex planning or adjustment of professional career, and to adaptations of working life to living and social conditions, also in the perspective of the progressive ageing of the general and working population.

Over the last decade an increasing interest in "temporal flexibility" can be observed, that leads, on one hand, to a demand for an increase in the number of hours during which the production is possible (company-oriented flexibility) and on the other hand, to a desire for a reduction of individual working hours and/or an increase in the autonomy of their regulation (Individual-oriented flexibility). Also, the society is interested in flexible working hours as many advantages can be derived from a more flexible arrangement of social activities and services.

While countries such as United Kingdom, Europe, United States, Australia and New Zealand have been incorporating workplace flexibility for a very long time, this working arrangement is new in the Indian work environment. Indian women are historically subject to a patriarchal society holding the ideology of "good mother and good wife". This ideology is further reinforced with colonialism which established economic structures which led to a gendered division of labour across all cultures. In a study by Kaur, (2004) which aimed to research the comparative understanding of the changing role of women's economic activities in 7 countries in Asia, it was noted that socio-cultural and religious background played a vital part for Asian women including Malaysian women who participated in the labour market.

Even though FFPs such as flexi time is a more common phenomenon in the western countries compared to Asian countries, some countries such as Hong Kong practice it to relieve traffic congestion. While 58 percent of the country's working women are married and hold dual roles, majority of the women continue to be involved in a very large proportion of unpaid household chores and caring work. FFPs results in a better working spirit and work performance among employees. The government agencies and a few multinational corporations and educational institutions in Malaysia have already implemented some form of FFPs and also various forms of flexi working.

As the workforce changes, organizations need to change their workplace policies to have a more holistic view of their employees and also to cater for the demands of the work and non-work responsibilities of their human resource. Evidence suggests that FFPs at the workplaces are beneficial and important for employees. (Liddicoat, L. 2003)

Methodology

The study utilized survey method of research.

Data sources

The primary data sources are the employees of the IT organizations working in Hyderabad. Since the study intended to assess the FFP practices of IT organizations, it is proposed to get the feel of the employees on this Facilities rather than what organizations did for gender sensitivity. As such instead of inquiring HR managers or the CEOs the study contacted employees to get the required information.

Secondary data sources included the published literature –books, journals, magazines and websites. The secondary data sources help understand the growth of IT sector, employment of women in the industry, the research works and viewpoints of various stakeholders.

The respondents were identified using the convenient sampling method, giving attention to quota sampling. This was in order to obtain a representative sample of employees in terms of gender, age.

Data Collection

Data collection for the study was unexpectedly a difficult task than expected. It is expected that the employees will respond freely without reservations, to the questionnaire designed to elicit information on FFPs in their organizations. However, citing several reasons ranging from personal (work at home, indifference, etc) to organizational (work deadlines, lack of proper awareness, etc) the employees did not give the expected cooperation. As such different approaches were adopted to obtain data to support the study. They include the following:

- o Questionnaire
- o Interview
- o Web postings

(i) Questionnaire

A questionnaire was adapted from Sullivan, Sherry E. And Lisa A. (2007), Geetha Subramaniam (2010) assess the perceived feelings about family friendly workplace. The relevant items are taken and worded to suit the present inquiry. Pilot test was conducted by distributing the questionnaire to 10 employees in an IT company. Based on the difficulty expressed by them in understanding and responding to the questions, the wording of questionnaire was modified.

A 5-page questionnaire is designed to collect opinions of both female and male employees in IT organizations. The questionnaire has a covering note with a request to the respondents to give their views and perspectives. They are assured their responses will be kept strictly confidential and will be used to develop collective profiles. The questionnaire is divided into three sections as given under.

- o Section -A : Identification data
- o Section -B: Employees' satisfaction level of specific family friendly policies
- o Section –C implications of flexi working among the employees

Section–A, sought information on 5 items of personal details like age, gender, marital status, Level of hierarchy and type of organization of the respondents and 5 items to assess how truly Family-Friendly is the workplace and the respondents were expected to answer the availability of the policy by ticking "Yes" or "No".

Section-B on employees' satisfaction level of specific family friendly policies in terms of leave entitlements and child care facilities And 8 items on the modes of family friendly policies to gauge which mode were the employees more interested in.

Section-C has questions on implications of flexi working among the employees.

The objective was to measure the perception of the respondents towards the flexi working hours and the question basically asked "that if they were given a choice to work flexi hours, what might the implications be?" The items were based on literature. Respondents were given 11 items and answered "yes" or "no".

(ii)Semi-structured interview

Discussions were held with about 50 women and 20 men to understand their views.

(iii)Web postings The data is collected by taking the help of my cousins who are working with TCS, Infosys, Wipro, IBM, Cisco, Delloite, and Hyderabad. By taking their e-mail Ids, I joined the IT professionals club which is one of the clubs organized by Toast Masters, an international organization. IT professionals post their experiences as well as queries to share experiences and wisdom. Every Saturday and Sunday, the members of the club located at Hyderabad, meet at a venue decided and communicated in advance. I took the opportunity and met the members during January-March, 2010 and requested them to provide personally data required but they advised me to post the queries in the website. Accordingly, I posted my queries and obtained brief responses based on their experiences. The collection of such responses is analyzed for obtaining an overall view of the employees on FFPs practices in organizations.

Sample

The choice of respondents required decisions at two stages:

(i) IT organizations

About 70 organizations took part in the study (Exhibit -1) but unfortunately many companies had declined permission to conduct the study. In view of this rejection, A self administered survey questionnaire was given initially to 82 women and 58 men identified respondents through the e-mail and also face-to-face. Using the snow ball technique, these respondents distributed the questionnaires to their acquaintances (With the help of network of friends and references, in all 70 organizations could be involved in the study.) and finally 392 questionnaires were collected. About 175 questionnaires gave usable responses. The target group was employees working with IT Companies in Hyderabad city of Andhra Pradesh, who are having more than 2 years of experience in the same organization.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics and inferences from the study were used to provide adequate scope for drawing logical conclusions on the availability of family friendly policies at the workplace. Through cross tabulations, it was possible to capture some of the inferences on employees' perception towards flexi working arrangements in the Hyderabad IT companies.

Limitations

The study has certain limitations to generalize the findings.

o The responses are colored by emotions in case of some employees. They are critical of the organizations and their policies. Some responses are based on indifference and others on a note of optimism. Since the analysis is based on averages the extreme views are moderated to a large extent.

Though many employees returned questionnaires, good number of them is incomplete. Since pursuing them further did not help, they were eliminated. The idea of collecting very large sample did not materialize because of the kind of response obtained. However, the obtained sample is large enough to represent the views of employees in the industry with desirable accuracy.

Findings and Discussion

Table 2 summarizes the demographic profile of the respondents. Majority of the respondents (72%) were females. Even though the main objective of the study is to assess perception towards FFPs which is generally linked to female employees, males were also given the questionnaire so as to find out their perception about FFPs and to see whether there were any significant differences in their perception towards FFPs.

Table 2: Demographic Profile

The respondents were quite fairly distributed in terms of age group. Majority of the respondents (31%) were in the age group of 30--39 years. This is the age group which shows a general downward trend in the female labor force participation rates in IT companies. Another good 26 percent were young employees below 30 years old. About 78 percent of employees were married. More than one third of the employees were from the middle level management and the balances one third were lower level, only a small proportion of 14% were from the senior management. Majority (77%) of employees were from multinational company (MNC).

Based on an evaluation scale built by Sullivan, Sherry E. and Lisa A. Mainiero (2007), questions were asked to the employees to determine how family friendly is their workplace. Table 3 which shows employees' perspective of FFP illustrates that majority (more than 51%) of the respondents are working in companies "that are building strengths towards family-friendly environment". It was found that generally the respondents were satisfied with the leave entitlements but most of the companies did not have the desired working arrangements which the employees would have preferred.

Another large proportion of them (31%) are working in companies which need to improve in terms of family friendly benefits. Only a small percentage of 18 percent of the respondents reported working in a truly family friendly company. Further examination of these respondents showed that they were companies related to top10 list who have relatively flexi time and some also have child care centers within the premises.

Table 3: The Number of Family-Friendly Companies

The respondents were asked to state their preference for different types of FFPs in terms of working arrangements. Based on focus group discussions with women groups and female employees, some of the more common modes of family friendly policies in terms of working arrangements were identified and posed to the respondents. Their responses were recorded and ranked as shown in Table 4. Some of the more common modes of FFPs which were requested and are in demand by the working females in IT companies range from flexible leave to various flexible working arrangements such as flexi time career break, tele working, job sharing and part-time employment.

Flexible leave was available more to employees but career break and job sharing was more common among higher executive level and not often heard among medium level or lower level positions. In terms of working policies, the table reveals that flexible leave was more popular compared to flex time. The most common mode of working arrangement among the respondents was flexible leave where 43 percent of the employees were given this choice at their workplace. Career breaks, whether less than 5 years or up to 5 years is rarely practiced in IT companies.

As for part-time employment, it seems to be the second least common mode which is practiced in IT companies with less than 38 percent of the employees having this policy at their workplace. It is generally a working arrangement when employees need extra income and is not provided by companies to their permanent employees. The least favored form was compressed work weeks, possibly as this carried the implication that this involved a heavier work load and a stress filled job.

Table 4: Modes of Family Friendly Policies

Even though FFPs and flexi working arrangements has implications on all employees, the study finds that female employees are more interested in flexi working hours than their male counterparts. The male employees in this study were more interested in skill development programmes, socializing, clubs and corporate wellness programmes.

The respondents were also asked what the types of family friendly benefits available in their company and if they were satisfied about it. Their responses are as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Benefits Available in the Companies

Benefits	Mean	Ranking
Annual Leave	1.1336	1
Emergency Leave	1.1586	2
Unpaid Leave	1.482	3
Maternity Leave	1.4837	4
Paternity Leave	1.495	5
Family Day Activities	1.4256	6
Day Care Centre	1.9326	7
Child Care Facility	1.9091	8
Nursing Area	1.9408	9
Elderly Care Centre	1.8092	10

The table above shows that majority of the respondents are most satisfied about their annual leave scheme, emergency leave and unpaid leave arrangements, but not about provision for elderly care centre, nursing area and child care facilities. Child care facilities is gaining a lot of recognition from the government with the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development's allocation of child care incentives and creches at work place, but this seems to be very slow in implementation in the IT sector. Elderly care, in terms of facilities or work time flexibility is also highly neglected. However, the numbers of elderly people are rising in India and it is difficult and expensive to hire a nanny, hence this is another area which clearly needs immediate improvement.

As shown in Table 6 below, some of the implications which were identified from previous literature were posed in the questionnaire. Majority of the respondents felt that flexi work generally will improve their social networking as they have more time to socialize and visit friends and relatives. More than 98 percent of the respondents felt that flexi work generally will improve their quality of life as well as work life balance. FFPs such as flexi time and part-time gives more time to improve their quality of life as they are able to balance work and home and are happy to work in such a workplace. They also commented that it helps them to be more committed and concentrate on work as home is manageable.

Table 6: Impact of FFPs on Work Life Balance

Some implications of FFP	Mean	Ranking
It might enhance my social networking	1.2176	1
It might improve my quality of life	1.2723	2
It might help me to improve my	1.5308	3
It might help me to have a better work life balance	1.5891	4
It might help me to further my studies	1.6468	5
It might encourage me to have more children	1.7478	6

Some of the respondents also commented that productivity will be improved as you work in a more conducive environment. Even though lifelong studying has become a norm for many employees, it was not very crucial among the respondents and this could be due to the age category of the respondents.

The respondents noted that with the implementation of FFPs, employers would likely be challenged with problems of absenteeism followed by more complicated employer issues and not keeping up with date lines. This is more so with FFPs such as flexible working arrangements. But the respondents noted that the rate of truancy and lower

productivity were the least of the challenges the employers might face.

Table 7: Challenges faced by the Employer

Potential problems due to flexible working hours	Mean	Ranking
Absenteeism	1.6701	1
More complicated employer issues	1.7713	2
Not keeping up with date lines	1.8151	3
Not turn up for work but report as attended	1.8632	4
Lower productivity	2.0367	5

This implies that flexible working hours does not lower one's work performance and productivity. In fact, this method is desired by some employers as it allows for staff to be more relaxed and yet produce output effectively.

Concluding Remarks

As more families end up as dual career families in India, especially when women are increasingly spending more time in paid labor and at the same time having to look into child care and elderly care needs, FFPs and flexi work is very pertinent in the economy. Families that have two streams of income are now considered the norm, and as parents and children construct their socializing together, they want to spend more time together. Despite work life reflecting a more widely shared and inclusive set of issues, childcare and elderly care nonetheless tend to be the responsibility of the women. In a gendered division of labor society, it is always the responsibility for a career woman to sacrifice her career to take care of the home. FFPs such as flexi time and part time may provide married women with young children who require the greatest parental time, to balance work and home.

It was found that the decline in the participation of women in the labor force in the United States was concentrated among highly educated married women with young children (Hotchkiss 2006). This was also the main reason why women left the labor force. "Spending time with family & Children was one of the main reasons cited by women who stopped working" (Nasscom Research). The nuclear family with a full-time mother managing the home has been transformed and this requires more crèches or child care facilities which are affordable and reliable.

With no extended family to rely upon, and trying to juggle both the reproductive and non-reproductive roles, many working women resolved to the compelling demand to have somebody to take over the non-economic roles and this created a high demand for foreign domestic workers over the last two decades in the country. It cannot be denied that FFPs and flexi time may be a contributory factor in determining whether more women may be able to participate in the labour market.

FFPs are beginning to get importance in the corporate sector in the country but flexible working hours are still hard to come by in most Indian firms. Government policies and good corporate social responsibility practices include achieving an ideal work life balance. At policy level, the Indian Government is officially committed to gender equality as articulated in the government 5 year plans & The state of AP has reserved 33% of places in all higher education institutions for women which is noteworthy policy that may encourage women enroll in advanced IT education programmes which they would normally unlikely to pursue. Other data on specific IT and women government programmes are not available.

In order to maintain India's competitive edge in the global economy, there is an urgent need to reduce its dependence on foreign labour and a "brain drain" culture. Policies which promote re-entry of women who have taken time off for child care and more flexibility at the work place need to be implemented by IT corporate in a more serious and systematic manner.

The study shows that there are many IT work places in Hyderabad city , India which have implemented FFPs such as various types of leave entitlements but in terms of working hours flexibility, there is still a lack of awareness and urgency among employers. Based on this study, there still exists a gap between employee's practical needs and the availability of family friendly policies.

Directions for Future Research

Future studies can focus on the above areas to provide latest information on practices and problems. Further focus could be extended to cross-industry (public vs private sector or manufacturing vs service sectors) and cross-national (India and USA, India and Taiwan) comparisons. Such cross –cultural settings provide a basis to understand how practices differ and what kind of innovations can be generated to improve and to get a clearer picture of the FFPs in the corporate sector.

Flexibility in the work place and more FFPs will not only benefit the organizations to access the global economy but also enable better work life balance and lead to a greater labour force participation among women in India.

References

1. Benchmarking Ideas for Fostering Family-Friendly Workplaces. *Organizational Dynamics*.(36)1,45-62.
2. Christiansen, Charles H and Matuska, Kathleen M. (2006). Lifestyle Balance: A Review of Concept and Research. *Journal of Occupational Science* 13(1), 49-61.
3. Chow, Irene Hau-siu & Chew, Irene Keng-Howe, (2006). The Effect of Alternative Work Schedules on Employee Performance *International Journal of Employment Studies*, 14(1), 105-130.
4. Chu, Sydney C.K. 2007. Generating, scheduling and rostering of shift crew-duties: Applications at the Hong Kong International Airport. *European Journal of Operational Research* 16 March. 177(3), 1764-1778. Retrieved on 11th June 2007 from <http://www.sciencedirect.com>
5. Cole, G.A., (2006). Flexibility and the workplace: the battle to control working time.

Managerial Law 48(6), 536-540.

6. Cox, Rosie. (1997). Invisible Labour: Perceptions of Paid Domestic Work in London. *Journal of Occupational Science* August 4(2), 62-68 Retrieved on 5 Feb 2009

7. de Menezes L.M., Wood, S. (2006), 'The reality of flexible work systems in Britain', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 17(1), 106-138;

8. Dresen, M.H.W. Frings, Sluiter, J.K. and Meijer, E.M. (2001). Review on the Effects of Working Time and Recovery Aspects on Work Ability of (Older) Workers. Coronel Institute for Occupational and Environmental Health, Academic Medical Center, University of Amsterdam December Retrieved on 11 June 2007 from <http://www.sciencedirect.com>

9. Goudswaard, A. & de Nanteuil, M. (2000). Flexibility and Working Conditions: A Qualitative and Comparative Study in EU Countries. European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions: Dublin. <http://www.sciencedirect.com>. Accessed 11/06/07

10. Hakansson, Carita, Dahlin-Ivanoff, Synneve and Sonn, Ulla. (2006) Achieving Balance in Everyday Life *Journal of Occupational Science* April 13(1), 74-82

11. Jones, Barry. (1998). Redefining Work: Setting Directions for the Future. *Journal of Occupational Science* 5(3), 127- 132

12. Kaur, Amarjit (2004) "Costed Not Valued: Women Workers In Industrialising Asia" New York. Palgrave Macmillan.

13. Liddicoat, L. (2003). Stakeholder perceptions of family-friendly workplaces: An examination of six New Zealand Organisations. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources* 41, 354

14. Liechty, M. Janet, Anderson, A. Elaine (2007) Flexible Workplace Policies: Lessons From the Federal Alternative Work Schedules Act, *Family Relations*, 56(3). (July 2007), 304-317.

15. Loh-Ludher, Lee Lee, (2002). Chinese Women In Industrial Home Based Subcontracting In The Garment Industry In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Neither Valued Nor Costed. Unpublished PhD thesis

16. Matuska, Kathleen M and Christiansen, Charles H. (2008). A Proposed Model Of Lifestyle Balance. *Journal of Occupational Science* April 15(1), 9-19.

17. Matuska, Kathleen M. and Erickson, Brenda. (2008). Lifestyle Balance: How It Is Described And Experienced By Women With Multiple Sclerosis. *Journal Of Occupational Science*. April. 15(1), 20-26.

18. McCann. D. (2004) Regulating Working Time Needs and Preferences in Working Time and Workers' Preferences in Industrialized Countries In (Ed.) Messenger, Jon C. *Finding the Balance* London and New York, Routledge

19. Nadeem, S., and Hendry, C. (2003). Power Dynamics In The Long Term Development Of Employee-Friendly Flexible Working, *Women In Management Review*,

18(1/2), 32-49.

20. Sullivan, Sherry E. and Mainiero, Lisa A. (2007). Kaleidoscope Careers: The Kaleidoscope Career Company Audit. Retrieved on 11 June 2007 from <http://www.sciencedirect.com>

21. UNESCAP. (2007). United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Annual Report, Bangkok: UNESCAP.

22. Warne, D. and Holland, C.P. (1999). Exploring Trust in Flexible Working Using a New Model BT Technology Journal, January, 17:1; 111

23. ChenMay Yee, “High tech Lift for India’s Women”, The Wall Street Journal, November 1, 2000

24. R Rajalakshmi (2003), “Emerging Trends of Women in the IT Profession in India”, Presentation at the International Forum – Women in Information and Communication Technologies in India, The Hawke Institute, University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia, November 5-7, 2003.p3.