

# Corporate Sector's Role in the Enablement of Women Careers in India: An Empirical Study

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**Abstract**—The Indian Corporate Sector has wide opened its doors of opportunities to competent women professionals over the span of the last two decades. While the initial career phases are relatively smooth for a woman, it is after she enters the institution of marriage that balancing home and work begin to take a toll on her. Many such women decide to abort their careers midway in the absence of support systems that could have helped sustain their careers. This study elaborates the ways in which organizations can check the drain of valuable female resources from their talent pipeline. Through the opinions of professional women drawn from diverse fields, this research found that the corporate initiatives for sustaining women careers that are valued most are: 1) Flexible Working Arrangements 2) Mentoring 3) Skill Building Programmes 4) Day care centers. The effectiveness of each of the listed 'career enablers' were measured in terms of their impact on two key 'career strength indicators' of a woman professional which are 1) Work – Life Integration and 2) Career Longevity. The research concludes that the contributions organizations can make to take our country closer to the vision of gender equality by providing for women career enablement, are immense.

**Keywords**—Career Break; Career Enablers; Career Strength Indicators; Career Sustainability; Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs); Indian Women Professionals (IWPs).

**Abbreviations**—Indian Women Professionals (IWPs); Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs).

## I. INTRODUCTION

IT has not been very long since the terms 'women' and 'careers' came to be associated, in the Indian context. With India's efforts in bridging the gap between educational attainments of both the genders, tasting success, the future does hold a lot of promise for women professionals. Across industries as diverse as banking to IT, the entry level Indian workforce does justice to the theme of gender diversity with women having proved their professional prowess. However if one is to scan the levels of the Indian corporate hierarchy, a disappointing realization is that the proportion of women adorning senior positions is meager at 5%. This brings into picture one more pertinent term that bears a close relationship with the terms 'women' and 'careers' – 'sustainability'. Why is it that a large number of Indian Women Professionals (IWPs) are unable to sustain their careers inspite of their abilities and aspirations? Can organizations in the Indian Corporate Sector make significant

contributions to help prevent women careers from de-railing? These are apposite questions this study attempts to address.

An Indian woman's role in the society could be best described as 'multidimensional'. Apart from being considered primarily responsible for household chores, the institution of marriage adds many new facets to a woman's list of responsibilities. Furthermore motherhood induces a radical paradigm shift in her priorities. In the absence of support systems that enable her career, routine errands coupled with care of her family and her children often forces her career to take a backseat. Sustaining her career becomes a virtual battle for the IWP when societal expectations due by virtue of being a wife, a mother, a daughter, a daughter-in-law et.al overwhelm her. It is at such junctures that the women professionals' organizations have much to do to ensure sustainability and enablement of their careers. The study detailed in this paper examines the importance of few significant corporate initiatives that can ensure steadily rising career graphs for women professionals. The consequences are

indeed win-win for both women and their employers as proactive measures at the employers' end to check the drain of valuable female talent can address the shortage of skills and labour by enlarging the recruitment pool and raising the return rate of women employees from parental leave, and those with young children. Businesses also benefit in many ways from increased employee good will, better staff morale, reduced absenteeism, and increased productivity.

The backbone of this research was a survey conducted on a heterogeneous sample of Indian Women Professionals employed in different industries with vastly different socio, economic and educational profiles. The women were assessed on the degrees of relevance they attach to different organizational efforts in retaining female talent over the years. The first and the foremost career enabler assessed was Flexible Working Arrangements provided by an IWP's employer. The next relevant enabler evaluated was mentoring through a well linked network of enthusiastic professionals. The third enabler women were required to comment upon were organisation led skill building initiatives. Day care centers franchised and run by the organization was the one last significant enabler explored. The utility of each of these enablers in sustaining women careers were determined based on their impact on two extremely critical career strength indicators (tangible measures used to evaluate organizational policies) for women namely Work – Life Integration and Career Longevity. The pan-industry research was able to highlight the criticality of organization led career enablers in sustaining women careers in India.

This paper is organized as follows: The definitive descriptions of the career enablers and the career strength indicators identified are presented initially. Global research in support of these is discussed alongside. The research methodology is presented next. The following section discusses the key findings of the study which is substantiated by appropriate statistical analyses. The conclusive results constitute the penultimate section of the paper. The plan of action for the future direction of this research is presented in the last section.

## II. CAREER ENABLERS

Career enablers are frameworks of support that a woman professional can avail of for better work life integration, which can in turn help sustain her career aspirations. The enablers can be broadly classified as 1) Organization initiated 2) Family/society initiated 3) Self initiated. In the context of this paper, we elaborately discuss the organization initiated career enablers (the support systems initiated by an organization) which are defined below:

### A. Flexible Working Arrangements

An arrangement between a woman professional and her organization such that her working patterns are different from the normal working patterns – they can involve changes to the hours she works, the times she is required to work or her place of work. Some of the most popular flexi time

arrangements are flexi-time work (an employee can set her work schedule), telecommuting (work from home or other remote locations), job sharing etc.

Here are some extremely relevant findings conducted by social scientists on the impact of flexible working on women careers. A study by the Cranfield university on employed women in U.K. [17] showed that an employee's state of well being is closely related to the work flexibility options he or she availed of. Reduced stress levels through a better work life balance and a healthier and more importantly a more productive employee are the positive outcomes. Kelliher & Anderson (2010) opined that flexi working can actually lead to work intensification. A Harvard Business Review article on changing the culture of face time speaks about how some simple work flexibility arrangements like reduced work hours (which can be achieved by eliminating redundant meetings and other unimportant activities) can go a long way in reducing employee stress thereby improving the employee's organizational loyalty [Munck, 2001]. The importance of flexibility in retaining women talent in corporations has been discussed in depth in another HBR article [Hewlett & Luce, 2005]. Another recent study by LinkedIn on Indian women and their attitude towards work flexibility reinstated the fact that a vast majority of them felt flexibility is a key aspect that would keep their careers thriving [Mayhew, 2012]. In a pertinent, recent study conducted by the authors of this paper, we found that over 68% of Indian women professionals were of the opinion that flexible working helps them integrate work and life seamlessly [Rajesh et al., 2013]. Flexible working is thus undoubtedly a trump card in the game of career advancement of an IWP.

### B. Mentoring

A professional relationship in which a subject matter expert within the organization (called the mentor) helps a junior women professional (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance her professional and personal growth. The mentoring process is mostly one-to-one and is continual and evolving in nature. Formal and informal women's networks within the organization usually help connect a prospective mentee to an appropriate mentor.

It can be noted that mentoring from senior leaders was found to be indispensable in the career advancement of women in a study that dates back to 1996 [Chandler, 1996]. The advantages of having a mentor vary from learning from their vast experiences to defining better career goals to increasing one's accountability [15]. The lack of mentorship is one of the major reasons for having fewer women leaders found another recent study [16]. Another research also points out that one frequently reported barrier to women's career success is a lack of access to mentors [Merridee, 2007]. How professional women use one aspect of social capital – networks - to assist with their career progression is detailed by Wang (2009). These studies undertaken by researchers across the globe prove that mentoring can indeed impact women career longevities and growths.

### **C. Organization led Skill Building Initiatives**

Initiatives rolled out by a woman professional's organization to help her acquire specific skills, both technical and others. These could be training programmes centered on a single skill (like time management) or self help certification programmes that are evaluated through examinations.

As early as in 1989, the need for special training programmes for women in management were identified and discussed [Reavley, 1989]. Recent studies show that absence of effective management training for female employees is a barrier in the path of women career advancement [17]. Training for professional development is extremely important to ready women for career succession plans in their organizations which can eventually lead to their career growths [Mayhew, 2012]. These are pointers enough to uphold the significance of training programmes in women career advancement.

### **D. Day Care Centers**

A caring facility run and managed by an organization for the all-round care of its women employees' young children. Such facilities are usually located within or very close to office premises, virtually reducing the distance between an employee's workplace and home as their kids are at hands reach.

Studies world over are in absolute support of this enabler. Day care services operated by an organization helps prevent women employees from quitting work or moving to other organizations where such services are already available, found a recent study [18]. Child care programmes serve the intersecting needs of women and her children and support a woman to carry on her tasks of a homemaker, mother and earner [Datta, 2013]. Lack of creche facilities impede a woman professional's career growth, voiced yet another study [Politzer, 2012].

To quote an HBR article on Women in Leadership, "When you put all the pieces together, a new picture emerges for why women don't make it into the C-suite. It's not the glass ceiling, but the sum of many obstacles along the way" [Eagly & Carli, 2007]. The 'Sum of obstacles' can be zeroed or negated if support systems enable the careers of woman professionals and to find the truth behind this statement is the objective of our study.

## **III. CAREER STRENGTH INDICATORS**

Career strength indicators are quantifiable measures of the effectiveness of organizational initiatives on the careers of its employees. These indicators are inversely proportional to the chance of a woman professional quitting her work. The two key indicators identified to assess the success rate of An Indian Women Professional's career are:

### **A. Work-Life Integration**

The process of integrating a woman employee's professional life (work) and family (life outside of work) seamlessly that could be achieved through the collective efforts of the

woman, her organization and her family. The woman is freed of uncalled-for stress that the act of balancing work and home judiciously would have otherwise induced. A 2010 survey on the reach of work flexibilities in the US and its impact on work life balance emphasize this.

### **B. Career Longevity**

The length in years of a woman professional's formal employment. Career longevity of a woman employee is usually increased by the availability of the career enablers as she can keep her career alive even during periods of crises when she would have otherwise had to quit work. Career retention and growth as direct consequences of work flexibility, one of the key career enablers, is discussed in great detail in Hewlett & Luce (2005). In our previous research we were able to prove that over 75% of IWPs approved of the critical role flexible working could play in stretching their career spans [Rajesh et al., (2013)].

## **IV. OBJECTIVES OF THIS RESEARCH**

This research was aimed at unraveling the critical contributions organizations in the Indian Corporate Sector can make in sustaining careers of its women professionals. Through a well fleshed out survey to extract the mindsets of women professionals from diverse fields of work on the need for career enablement to ensure sustainability of their careers, the study attempted to unearth the relevance and similarities of their requirements. The findings of the study can potentially guide organizations along the path of initiatives for ensuring gender diversity and inclusion.

## **V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The foundation for the research was a questionnaire that required women professionals to share their experiences with and views on various career enablers provided by their organizations. Women belonging to different age groups and based out of cities/towns all over India took the survey. These IWPs also had remarkably different socio, economic and educational profiles which increased the study sample diversity. This included women working at various levels of the organizations from junior managers to the CEOs, most of who have/had used one or more of the organization provided career enablers at critical junctures in their lives. While some of these professionals were on career breaks, others had enviable, uninterrupted careers and a few others were enroute successful second innings in their careers.

A total of 1060 women took part in the survey. The majority (45%) fell in the age bracket 26 to 35 followed by 21% of IWPs aged 21-25 years and 19% of IWPs aged 36 – 45 years. 6% were women aged above 46 and 1% below the age of 20. Majority of the women aged 26 and above were married. 26% of women came from households having an annual income between 5 to 10 lakhs and another 26% had family incomes between 3 to 5 lakhs. As for their educational backgrounds, 27% of IWPs surveys held professional post

graduate degrees, 26 % were graduates, another 23 % were professional graduates, 10% were diploma holders, 9% were post graduates and 6% held doctoral degrees or equivalent. While 73% of them were currently working full time, 13% of them were working flexibly. 54% of these IWPs had a work experience of 5 years or less, 22% have been working for almost 10 years whereas only 3% of the participants had a total work experience amounting to 20 years plus. 27% of the IWPs surveyed were associated with the IT industry, 14% were HR managers and 10% worked in the finance and accounts department of their organizations. The distribution of the women workforce (who took the survey) across industries is as shown in Figure 1.

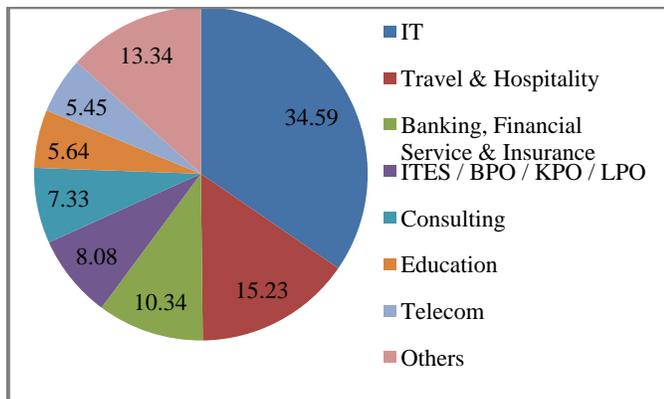


Figure 1: Women Employed in Different Industries

## VI. KEY FINDINGS

The significant research findings of this study are discussed in this section. The degrees of importance of each of the enlisted career enabler with regard to its impact on an IWP's

career strength indicators are elaborated. The underlying commonalities of the needs of women professionals for career sustainability and enablement were hitherto established.

### 6.1. Impact of Flexible Working Arrangements

Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) is an umbrella term comprising of those working patterns different from the normal working patterns involving changes to the hours an employee works, the times they are required to work or their place of work. Some of the most popular FWAs are flexi-time arrangements, telecommuting, compressed work hours, and job sharing etc.

#### 6.1.1. Work Life Integration and FWAs

Work – life integration is one of the most critical indicators of a woman professional's career strength. Recent researches show that women value the choice of effectively integrating careers and personal lives perhaps more than monetary benefits. Given this context, it may be noted that all flexible arrangements guarantee a woman professional the much needed autonomy and control over her daily schedule. She has the liberty to choose her hours of work or place of work which helps her fit her domestic responsibilities into her chart of professional commitments almost perfectly. For e.g. a visit to the doctor's or her son's routine school open house can be fitted into an IWP's lunch hour helping her feel more contented and guilt free at the end of the day. Activities pertaining to domesticity are slowly and seamlessly weaved into her career trajectory. Table 1 shows the responses of women on the impact of flexible working on work-life integration.

Table 1: Flexible Working Arrangements and Work-Life-Integration: Opinions of Different IWPs

Industry	IT	ITES / BPO / KPO / LPO	Telecom	Travel & Hospitality	Retail	Manufacturing / Engineering	Banking, Financial Service & Insurance	FMCG / Consumer Goods	Consulting	Media & Advertising	Education	Others
Not relevant/ Not Significant	0.54%	4.65%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	13.33%	0.00%	0.00%
Very less important	5.43%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.82%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Somewhat important	4.35%	9.30%	6.90%	3.70%	44.44%	14.29%	12.73%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.33%	0.00%
Moderately important	22.28%	4.65%	27.59%	19.75%	11.11%	0.00%	3.64%	28.57%	7.69%	0.00%	16.67%	0.00%
Very important	50.00%	48.84%	37.93%	49.38%	33.33%	57.14%	58.18%	71.43%	87.18%	46.67%	46.67%	100.00%
Indispensable/ Extremely important	17.39%	32.56%	27.59%	27.16%	11.11%	28.57%	23.64%	0.00%	5.13%	40.00%	33.33%	0.00%

The results show that women from all walks of work covet work flexibility and rate it as an extremely important enabler her organization needs to provide her with.

#### 6.1.2. Career Longevities and FWAs

The Indian socio-cultural milieu has prescribed sets of 'homely' and social duties for women that are handed over to her soon after marriage. Following career aspirations while doing justice to domestic responsibilities is a dream for most of these women. This is possible only when they are granted

considerable autonomy over their working hours. Periods of crises involving work-life conflicts (for e.g. care of a young child or an elderly dependent) can be navigated efficiently by putting to use techniques of work flexibility (for e.g. work from home). Women professionals consequently do not find themselves outside the loop of corporate connectivity ever and are able to carve for themselves successful career sagas. In Table 2 is shown how women position flexible working arrangements in their quest for a long and promising career.

Table 2: Flexible Working Arrangements and Career Longevity: Opinions of different IWP

Industry / Response	IT	ITES / BPO / KPO / LPO	Telecom	Travel & Hospitality	Retail	Manufacturing / Engineering	Banking, Financial Service & Insurance	FMCG / Consumer Goods	Consulting	Media & Advertising	Education	Others
Somewhat important	4.89%	2.33%	0.00%	6.17%	33.33%	0.00%	23.64%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	3.33%	0.00%
Moderately important	33.70%	13.95%	34.48%	19.75%	0.00%	14.29%	7.27%	57.14%	17.95%	0.00%	16.67%	0.00%
Very important	42.39%	39.53%	31.03%	<b>46.91%</b>	44.44%	28.57%	<b>60.00%</b>	42.86%	43.59%	40.00%	26.67%	<b>100.00%</b>
Indispensable/Extremely important	19.02%	44.19%	34.48%	27.16%	22.22%	<b>57.14%</b>	9.09%	0.00%	38.46%	40.00%	<b>53.33%</b>	0.00%

6.2. Impact of Mentoring

Mentoring by senior leaders in her organization can definitely help a woman employee align her personal goals of success with that of the organization. When it is known to her that her seniors too have encountered similar obstacles along their path to success, she is not intimidated by the stumbling blocks challenging her and remains focused. Effective channels of communication through which an IWP can voice her concerns regarding her professional responsibilities or work life integrations are opened by way of mentoring.

6.2.1. Work Life Integration and Mentoring

Mentors who are able to sustain career aspirations of their mentees help them hold on to their career paths even when juggling pressure weighs down on them. Valuable tips on how smart working can help IWPs save time and make more time for their lives outside work resonate with them completely. They come to believe that the myth of doing it all can be brought closer to reality through sheer determination and focus. In, Table 3 is shown the importance women professionals from different industries attach to mentoring in helping them integrate their work and lives.

Table 3: Mentoring and Work-Life-Integration: Opinions of different IWP

Industry / Response	IT	ITES / BPO / KPO / LPO	Telecom	Travel & Hospitality	Retail	Manufacturing / Engineering	Banking, Financial Service & Insurance	FMCG / Consumer Goods	Consulting	Media & Advertising	Education	Others
Not relevant/Not Significant	5.98%	9.30%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	14.55%	0.00%	2.56%	13.33%	3.33%	0.00%
Very less important	3.26%	2.33%	6.90%	6.17%	44.44%	14.29%	3.64%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%	3.33%	0.00%
Somewhat important	19.02%	6.98%	6.90%	13.58%	0.00%	0.00%	47.27%	57.14%	41.03%	13.33%	26.67%	0.00%
Moderately important	32.07%	34.88%	58.62%	54.32%	44.44%	42.86%	23.64%	28.57%	43.59%	33.33%	43.33%	100.00%
Very important	34.78%	32.56%	20.69%	16.05%	11.11%	14.29%	9.09%	0.00%	12.82%	33.33%	16.67%	0.00%
Indispensable/Extremely important	4.89%	13.95%	6.90%	9.88%	0.00%	14.29%	1.82%	0.00%	0.00%	6.67%	6.67%	0.00%

6.2.2. Career Longevity and Mentoring

Having a mentor(s) who can answer an IWP’s consuming doubts on the relevance of her career against the backdrop of her family, helps her take important decisions about her career future without hurting the two dimensions that define her life. The IWP’s career is sustained by the reinforcement of belief in her abilities provided through mentoring. Women

seeking a second career innings also find formal networks of mentors as possible entry points for their new starts. The consequence is long, flourishing women careers that hold the promise for a better tomorrow. Table 4 shows the responses of IWPs on the impact of mentoring on their career longevities.

Table 4: Mentoring and Career Longevity: Opinions of different IWP

Industry / Response	IT	ITES / BPO / KPO / LPO	Telecom	Travel & Hospitality	Retail	Manufacturing / Engineering	Banking, Financial Service & Insurance	FMCG / Consumer Goods	Consulting	Media & Advertising	Education	Others
Not relevant/Not Significant	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Very less important	1.09%	0.00%	0.00%	3.70%	0.00%	0.00%	14.55%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Somewhat important	7.07%	11.63%	13.79%	9.88%	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%	42.86%	15.38%	20.00%	6.67%	0.00%
Moderately important	45.11%	32.56%	55.17%	56.79%	77.78%	71.43%	70.91%	14.29%	71.79%	53.33%	53.33%	100.00%
Very important	38.04%	27.91%	24.14%	24.69%	11.11%	14.29%	10.91%	42.86%	12.82%	26.67%	30.00%	0.00%
Indispensable/Extremely important	8.70%	27.91%	6.90%	4.94%	0.00%	14.29%	3.64%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%

The response analysis shows that for most women, especially those working in IT, mentoring enable their careers and they remain corporate workers for a greater span of time.

**6.3. Impact of Organization led Skill Building Initiatives**

Training programmes initiated by the organization can help IWP's acquire specific skills that will aid their professional and personal growths. Skill building initiatives, for e.g. one that teaches 'Time Management' or one centered on 'Techniques of virtual working' [learning how to tele-conference and co-ordinate online meetings] can help them embrace smart working without glitches.

**6.3.1. Work Life Integration and Skill Building Programmes**

Most skill building programmes designed and implemented by subject matter experts impart appropriate soft skills that will help IWP's manage their work and lives well. Through some of these programmes aimed at helping women sharpen their leadership qualities or improve their abilities to multitask, women professionals become aware of techniques that they can put to use in their official domains as well as in life outside of work. Women also are comforted by the knowledge that they are not alone in this journey as they come to share their bitter sweet experiences of balancing life and work with like minded women who sign up for these programmes.

In Table 5 is shown the significance of organization led skill building initiatives in a woman professional's efforts to integrate work and life.

Table 5: Organization led Skill Building and Work-Life Integration: Opinions of different IWP's

Industry Response	IT	ITES / BPO / KPO / LPO	Telecom	Travel & Hospitality	Retail	Manufact uring / Engineeri ng	Banking, Financial Service & Insurance	FMCG / Consumer Goods	Consulting	Media & Advertising	Education	Others
Not relevant\Not Significant	2.72%	6.98%	0.00%	7.41%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	13.33%	6.67%	0.00%
Very less important	10.33%	4.65%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	14.29%	12.73%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Somewhat important	10.33%	9.30%	13.79%	9.88%	11.11%	28.57%	25.45%	28.57%	23.08%	26.67%	33.33%	0.00%
Moderately important	33.70%	39.53%	62.07%	55.56%	55.56%	28.57%	34.55%	57.14%	66.67%	20.00%	20.00%	0.00%
Very important	32.07%	16.28%	17.24%	19.75%	0.00%	14.29%	23.64%	0.00%	2.56%	40.00%	36.67%	100.00%
Indispensable\Extremely important	10.87%	23.26%	6.90%	7.41%	0.00%	14.29%	3.64%	0.00%	7.69%	0.00%	3.33%	0.00%

**6.3.2. Career Longevity and Skill Building Programmes**

Skill building initiatives that equip women professionals with extremely relevant corporate etiquettes or job specific technical skills pave the way for their long and fulfilling careers. Women's respect and regard for their organizations are also enhanced through such programmes (as they come to believe that organizations actually value the talent in them

and are seeking out ways to hone these skills). As a result they tend to stick to their jobs even during times of adversity strengthened by the new set of skills they possess elongating their career spans in the process. Table 6 shows the industry segregated responses of IWP's on the role of skill building programmes in their career longevity.

Table 6: Organization led Skill Building Initiatives and Career Longevity: Opinions of different IWP's

Industry Response	IT	ITES / BPO / KPO / LPO	Telecom	Travel & Hospitality	Retail	Manufact uring / Engineeri ng	Banking, Financial Service & Insurance	FMCG / Consumer Goods	Consulting	Media & Advertising	Education	Others
Not relevant\Not Significant	0.00%	2.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	0.00%	2.56%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Very less important	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.23%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Somewhat important	5.43%	0.00%	27.59%	11.11%	33.33%	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%	2.56%	26.67%	6.67%	0.00%
Moderately important	50.54%	37.21%	24.14%	53.09%	44.44%	57.14%	32.73%	42.86%	58.97%	53.33%	43.33%	100.00%
Very important	27.72%	18.60%	31.03%	22.22%	11.11%	42.86%	21.82%	42.86%	25.64%	13.33%	20.00%	0.00%
Indispensable\Extremely important	16.30%	41.86%	17.24%	12.35%	11.11%	0.00%	7.27%	0.00%	10.26%	6.67%	30.00%	0.00%

**6.4. Impact of Organization provided Day Care Centres**

Many organizations have woken up to the unique need of young mothers for facilities of care for their kids. In this age when more and more families in India are following the

nuclear structure, the relevance of this enabler cannot be undermined. In the absence of an extended family that could have shared a woman professional's caring responsibility, such services become a welcome relief. Reliable and

affordable crèches within the office premise virtually brings home closer to work for an IWP. Women who enjoy work and families equally see no reason for their careers to be disrupted and stay active in the corporate circuit throughout.

6.4.1. Work Life Integration and Day Care Centers

Getting back to work after maternity leave has been an ordeal for many an Indian woman. The major factor that pulls them away from work is the unavailability of reliable care for their young ones. Many talented mothers are overcome by the

sense of duty to their children and quit work. However when an IWP’s organization steps in to provide facilities of all round care for the young ones, she sees it as the biggest incentive to get back to work. The borderline between life and work is no longer marred by confusions and the onward journey evolves to be a happy one for both the woman and her employer. In table 7 are discussed the importance IWPs attach to such schemes in helping them manage their lives better.

Table 7: Organization provided Day Care Services and Work-Life-Balance: Opinions of different IWPs

Industry / Response	IT	ITES / BPO / KPO / LPO	Telecom	Travel & Hospitality	Retail	Manufacturing / Engineering	Banking, Financial Service & Insurance	FMCG / Consumer Goods	Consulting	Media & Advertising	Education	Others
Not relevant/Not Significant	9.24%	18.60%	13.79%	8.64%	33.33%	42.86%	25.45%	14.29%	25.64%	33.33%	26.67%	0.00%
Very less important	2.72%	16.28%	6.90%	2.47%	0.00%	0.00%	5.45%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Somewhat important	15.22%	6.98%	24.14%	14.81%	0.00%	0.00%	21.82%	28.57%	17.95%	20.00%	40.00%	0.00%
Moderately important	42.93%	34.88%	31.03%	41.98%	55.56%	28.57%	29.09%	28.57%	51.28%	13.33%	23.33%	0.00%
Very important	24.46%	9.30%	20.69%	18.52%	0.00%	14.29%	14.55%	0.00%	0.00%	26.67%	10.00%	100.00%
Indispensable/Extremely important	5.43%	13.95%	3.45%	13.58%	11.11%	14.29%	3.64%	0.00%	5.13%	6.67%	0.00%	0.00%

As can be seen from Table 7, a majority of women professionals feel that organization provided crèches help them delegate their caring responsibilities to reliable sources. The result of reduced stress helps them attain a finer balance between work and life.

6.4.2. Career Longevity and Day Care Centers

Day care services that an organization provides are clear incentives for mothers joining back work after maternity

leaves. In the absence of other support systems, such facilities prove to be reliable houses of care and prove to be an additional bonus for women with caring responsibilities. The careers of women employees of such organizations are interrupted only to a small extent. The result is a gender balanced workforce across different levels in the organization as women talent is retained over the years. Table 8 elaborates the responses of IWPs on the relevance of organization provided day care services in their career longevity.

Table 8: Organization provided Day Care Services and Career Longevity: Opinions of different IWPs

Industry / Response	IT	ITES / BPO / KPO / LPO	Telecom	Travel & Hospitality	Retail	Manufacturing / Engineering	Banking, Financial Service & Insurance	FMCG / Consumer Goods	Consulting	Media & Advertising	Education	Others
Not relevant/Not Significant	2.17%	13.95%	6.90%	12.35%	0.00%	28.57%	5.45%	28.57%	23.08%	20.00%	20.00%	0.00%
Very less important	1.09%	0.00%	3.45%	2.47%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	26.67%	0.00%
Somewhat important	12.50%	13.95%	34.48%	11.11%	44.44%	0.00%	23.64%	28.57%	23.08%	6.67%	10.00%	0.00%
Moderately important	51.63%	34.88%	34.48%	48.15%	44.44%	42.86%	60.00%	14.29%	51.28%	66.67%	26.67%	100.00%
Very important	25.00%	18.60%	13.79%	19.75%	11.11%	28.57%	7.27%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%
Indispensable/Extremely important	7.61%	18.60%	6.90%	6.17%	0.00%	0.00%	3.64%	0.00%	2.56%	6.67%	6.67%	0.00%

As can be inferred from Table 8, crèches within the organizations are lucrative enough to keep women professionals tied to work even when caring responsibilities define their personal lives.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The pan-industry study was able to bring to light the indispensability associated with initiatives at the corporate sector’s end for the career enablement of Indian Women Professionals. It is a laudable fact that India Inc. has been extremely hospitable to young women at the threshold of their careers. However as these women pedal ahead in the cycle of life and marriage and motherhood gift a new

baggage of responsibilities to them, they are in need of greater organizational support in the form of career enablers to keep their careers afloat. This study found that the most sought after organization provided career enabler for women was flexible working. As this key enabler provides women greater control over their work schedules, a smooth integration of work and life is a direct consequence. The women professionals are able to stay in mainstream work for a longer time and climb the rungs of the corporate ladder in the process. Mentoring help IWPs find solutions to their professional (and even personal) dilemmas and the women are inspired to emulate the role models they see in their mentors. Besides, the network that women professionals (as mentors and mentees) consequently form act as effective channels of communication that strengthens every woman's prospects of corporate connectivity. Skill building programmes is yet another important enabler that guides women professionals in the path of skill acquisition which in turn ensures their high levels of competence. Such initiatives could be a precursor to long and eventful careers for women, found our study. Young mothers who do not have an extended family to take care of their kids vouched for the effectiveness of day care centers in enabling and sustaining their careers. The findings of the study thus help us conclude that career enablers that are tailor made to cater to the unique needs of the working women community when acting in unison can help IWPs seamlessly integrate their work and lives. Women careers would consequently stretch over many more years than otherwise, the dream result being greater female presence in corporate boardrooms, tomorrow.

### VIII. FUTURE WORK

In the near future, we intend to understand the applicability and significance of the organization provided career enablers to women in each of the different age groups, performing varied job functions. While some of these enablers would be primarily critical in the initial stages of an IWP's career the others would need to be offered on a continuous basis to assure their career stabilities over the years. We also intend to research what more the women professionals themselves and their families as also their personal ecosystem can do to keep their careers from getting derailed.

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