

A Need for Effective Mentors to promote Entrepreneurship –a Case Study of IT Women

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Abstract: *Entrepreneurship is the need of the hour in the present scenario and more youth need to be motivated to become entrepreneurs in view of the looming unemployment and under employment in the economy. An entrepreneur is one who launches an enterprise on his own and is willing to take the risks involved to pursue his dreams. Entrepreneurship in various fields is highly challenging and yet at the same time satisfying. It provides an opportunity to explore new frontiers in social entrepreneurship also, besides the manufacturing, innovative technology, IT and service segments. The present study was undertaken in Hyderabad, capital of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. Two hundred women employed in the IT and 100 women employed in the ITeS sectors were selected on convenience sampling method. Questionnaire-based survey and Case study methods were employed to elicit the data. Many IT women had the dream of starting an enterprise on their own, but could not pursue their dreams. Mentoring the young aspiring IT women could possibly lead to an increment in the numbers of women entrepreneurs.*

Key Words: *dreams, IT women, Entrepreneurship*

INTRODUCTION: Empowerment of women is imperative for the achievement of sustainable development. Strategies for empowering women must focus beyond economic restructuring, to include restructuring of social relations which constrain and restrain women. The position of women in any civilization shows the stage of evolution it has reached and furnishes the truest test of its civilization and culture. Women double up as bridges as well as synthesizers of culture and traditions as they are not only conservers of traditions but also absorbers of breaks in traditions. Women ensure the continuity which strengthens the roots and simultaneously engineer change and growth to keep society dynamic. Women thereby play a very important role in shaping the future of a society (Times of India, 2011). The last three decades have witnessed a rapid acceleration and spread of new technologies which have brought about a sea change in the employment scenario in not only India, but also worldwide. Information and communication technologies which encompass the spheres of Information Technology (IT) software and IT enabled services (ITES) may to a large extent be held responsible for a paradigm shift in the 'new' economy or knowledge economy, as it is referred to. The department of Information Technology, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India

(2011) classifies the IT industry into two categories, namely, IT Software, Services and BPO and Electronics Hardware.

The IT sector in India has created employment opportunities in areas such as telecommunications, banking, retail trade, education, health care and business. While the IT industry is widely regarded as a model for India's development due to its concentration on the export of software and IT enabled services (ITeS), it is largely an enclave economy that is closely linked to the global economy but has few substantial linkages to local, regional and national economies. IT industry is perceived to be a women friendly industry. Many IT majors have initiated numerous initiatives to render work places and work culture 'gender friendly'. However, the very nature of the IT work and their own built-in beliefs and socialization trends and the widely prevalent stereotypes come in the way of IT women breaking the invisible 'glass ceiling' and achieving positive work life balance. Extensive research has been undertaken in the west to analyse and understand the work /life issues of women in the IT sector.

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To know the socioeconomic profile of the selected IT women
2. To understand the dreams of the IT women

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: In a global perspective, India is located in the lower ranks of medium human development, though currently the country is poised to cross the threshold to join the ranks of the world's middle income countries. In 2006 its GDP per capita reached USD (PPP) 2,489, ranking number 134 in the world. The estimated earned income for men was USD 3,698 and for women USD 1,185 (UNDP), implying a women to men parity rate of 32%. This extremely low rate is indicative for the position of Indian women in the field of work and employment (van Klaveren et al., 2010). An analysis of the newly released data from the 66th round of the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) survey reveals that there has been a dramatic fall in the labour force participation ratio (LFPR) of women in both rural areas (to 26.5 per cent from 33.3 per cent in 2005) and urban areas (to 14.6 per cent from 17.8 per cent in 2005), while the unemployment rate has also fallen dramatically (www.itsmyascent.com, 2011). Women's work participation rates, occupational distribution and shifts are often taken as indicators to assess the impact of economic development. Studies have revealed that working women contribute a much larger share of their household income to sustenance of the household compared to men (WHO, 2000). Indian women executives who hold the responsibility of a dual career as mother and worker find themselves belonging in two competing systems, getting pulled and pushed between the multiple roles and expectations (Parikh and Shah, 1996; Sharma and Sharma, 2006). Crompton (2006) opines that from the 20th century onwards women's claims to economic and social equality have been accepted. However, the impact of this change would not be total unless (a) men become more like women, and begin

to combine both caring and market work over their productive lives, and (b) states and governments confront the necessity of providing greater family supports and regulating ‘family – unfriendly’ employment. The contribution of men to the family in terms of taking care of kids and the elderly, education and development, in the kitchen and other household chores need to increase manifold. Society and work /corporate culture need to change and become more family-friendly by providing flexible timings for working mothers and working fathers (Tarangini, 2010).

Some managers in IT firms have been trying to improve the gender ratio in their workforces by formulating ‘woman-friendly’ policies, such as options for part-time work or working from home, provision of crèche, and so on. All companies allow three months paid maternity leave as mandated by law, with an option for a further three months unpaid leave. Programmes aimed at mentoring women and addressing their specific issues have been instituted. Despite these efforts, women face certain barriers in the software industry (Upadhyaya, 2006).

METHODOLOGY: Survey method was employed to elicit the information. A questionnaire with close ended questions was designed for the purpose. It was pre tested and suitably modified. The sample comprised of IT women who were married, 200 from IT and 100 from ITeS sectors. The data was collected, consolidated, tabulated and analysed. A selected sub sample was studied using the Case study method.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION:

1. **General Background:** The general information pertaining to the IT women is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Personal Information of IT Women

Details		Group				Total	
		IT n=200		ITeS n=100		n=300 %	
		No.	%	No.	%		
Age	21 – 30 yrs	143	71.5	65	65.0	208	69.3
	31 – 40 yrs	46	23.0	22	22.0	68	22.7
	41 – 50 yrs	11	5.5	13	13.0	24	8.0
Education	Diploma/Intermediate/ITI	-	-	14	14.0	14	4.7

	Graduate	24	12.0	40	40.0	64	21.3
	Professional graduate	27	13.5	23	23.0	50	16.7
	Post Graduate (PG)	50	25.0	14	14.0	64	21.3
	Professional PG	99	49.5	9	9.0	108	36.0
Designation	Junior level	161	80.5	75	75.0	236	78.7
	Middle level	30	15.0	20	20.0	50	16.7
	Senior level	9	4.5	5	5.0	14	4.7
Monthly income	Up to Rs.30000/-	151	75.5	89	89.0	240	80.0
	Rs.30001-60000/-	24	12.0	7	7.0	31	10.3
	Rs.60001-90000/-	13	6.5	2	2.0	15	5.0
	Above Rs.90000/-	12	6.0	2	2.0	14	4.7

A majority of 71.5 per cent of women in Information Technology (IT) and 65 per cent in Information Technology enabled Services (ITeS) segments were in the age group of 21-30 years. Women in 31-40 years age group constituted 23 per cent and 22 per cent of IT and ITeS women respectively. Among both the groups together women in 41-50 years age group were only eight per cent. In IT 49.5 per cent and 25 per cent women were professional postgraduate and post graduate degree holders respectively whereas in ITeS 40 per cent and 23 per cent women were graduates and post graduates respectively. The proportion of employees with technical qualifications is higher in IT industries than in BPO/ITeS because one needs to be an engineer or a technocrat to get employment in the IT industry. On the contrary, the entry requirement for the BPO/ITeS sector is much more flexible, with any degree and communication and soft skills being adequate to enter (Suriya, 2005).

2. Dreams of IT Women: The information pertaining to the dreams of the IT women are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Dreams of IT Women

Dreams*	Group				Total	
	IT n=200		ITeS n=100		n=300	%
	No.	%	No.	%		
Start own enterprise	66	35.3	43	45.7	109	38.8
Work for a social cause	67	35.8	30	31.9	97	34.5
Own a villa	66	35.3	14	14.9	80	28.5
Provide employment to others	38	20.3	21	22.3	59	21.0
Own a BMW car	12	6.4	11	11.7	23	8.2
See India as leader in IT arena	8	4.3	3	3.2	11	3.9
Become CEO of their company	4	2.1	5	5.3	9	3.2
Work with IT icons	2	1.1	5	5.3	7	2.5
Work for religious cause	4	2.1	3	3.2	7	2.5
Own an IT company	1	.5	2	2.1	3	1.1

*Multiple response

A significant number of more than one third of IT women had the dream to work for a social cause, to start their own enterprise and to own a villa. The ITeS women also had the dream of starting their own enterprise (45.7%), to work for a social cause (31.9%) and to provide employment to others (22.3%). An increasing entrepreneurial interest and social consciousness in the educated youth is indicated by the

dreams of IT women. These dreams also reflect the high ambitions of IT women to contribute towards the growth and development of the society and nation at large.

3.Dreams of IT Women versus socio-economic variables

The analysis regarding the dreams of IT women versus socio-economic variables is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Dreams of IT Women Versus Socio-Economic Variables

Variables		Group						't' value
		IT			ITeS			
		Mean	S.D	No.	Mean	S.D	No.	
Age	21 – 30 yrs	1.35	0.68	143	1.54	0.75	65	1.788 ^{NS}
	31-40 yrs	1.46	0.84	46	1.09	0.53	22	1.878 ^{NS}
	41-50 yrs	0.73	0.47	11	1.00	0.58	13	1.256 ^{NS}
Education	Diploma/Intermediate/ITI	.	.		1.29	0.47	14	
	Graduate	1.04	0.62	24	1.53	0.82	40	2.494 [*]
	Professional graduate	1.52	0.75	27	1.30	0.70	23	1.033 ^{NS}
	Post graduate(PG)	1.28	0.61	50	1.14	0.36	14	0.803 ^{NS}
	Professional PG	1.39	0.78	99	1.33	1.00	9	0.218 ^{NS}
Designation	Junior level	1.35	0.70	161	1.39	0.79	75	0.381 ^{NS}
	Middle level	1.40	0.89	30	1.25	0.44	20	0.693 ^{NS}
	Senior level	1.00	0.50	9	1.60	0.55	5	2.083 [*]
Monthly income	Up to Rs.30000/-	1.27	0.65	151	1.39	0.73	89	1.333 ^{NS}

	Rs.30001-60000/-	1.75	0.90	24	1.29	0.76	7	1.243 ^{NS}
	Rs.60001-90000/-	1.69	0.85	13	1.00	0.00	2	\$
	Above Rs.90000/-	1.00	0.74	12	1.00	0.00	2	\$
Size of family	Small	1.35	0.75	103	1.42	0.79	60	0.541 ^{NS}
	Medium	1.31	0.72	89	1.31	0.61	39	0.052 ^{NS}
	Large	1.50	0.53	8	1.00	.	1	\$
Total		1.34	0.73	200	1.37	0.72	100	0.388 ^{NS}

*-Significant at 5% level; NS-Not significant; \$-Fewersample

There was a significant difference between the IT and ITeS groups in terms of their dreams, among the women with graduate degree and those in the senior level designation at 5% level. There was no overall significant difference between the two groups in terms of their dreams versus the socio-economic variables like age, monthly income and size of family. The dreams were independent of the age, education, designation and size of family.

4. Dreams of IT Women Versus age

Table 4 portrays a comparative picture of the dreams of IT women against their age.

Table 4: Dreams Versus age

Dreams	Age						Total	
	21 - 30 yrs		31-40 yrs		41-50 yrs		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Start own enterprise	80	40.2	25	39.7	4	21.1	109	38.8
Work for a social cause	58	29.1	30	47.6	9	47.4	97	34.5

Own a villa	66	33.2	12	19.0	2	10.5	80	28.5
Provide employment to others	37	18.6	18	28.6	4	21.1	59	21.0
Own a BMW car	23	11.6	-	-	-	-	23	8.2
See India as leader in IT arena	7	3.5	2	3.2	2	10.5	11	3.9
Become CEO of your company	9	4.5	-	-	-	-	9	3.2
Work with IT icons	7	3.5	-	-	-	-	7	2.5
Work for religious cause	3	1.5	4	6.3	-	-	7	2.5
Own a IT company	3	1.5	-	-	-	-	3	1.1

It was interesting to observe that a dream to start own enterprise being strong in the age group of 21-30 years (40.2%) gradually diminished by the 41-50 years age group to 21.1 per cent. Similarly while a dream to own a villa was high in 21-30 years age group (33.3%) it reduced to 10.5 per cent in the 41-50 years age group. However, the dreams to provide employment to others, to see India as a leader in IT arena and to work for a social cause became stronger from age to age. This trend is very heartening since it indicates a weakening of materialistic dreams and a strengthening of those which lead to capacity building, social upliftment and development of the economy.

CONCLUSION: Young IT women are enthusiastic about their dreams. All of them had dreams of becoming entrepreneurs and starting something on their own. The reason why many of them might not have taken the plunge, could be, inadequate mentoring, lack of awareness about the support systems in place, about the Government support for the same. It may be concluded that they are very much in need of strong mentors, who would facilitate the process of channelizing their energy and interests. With adequate mentoring support, and timely guidance, it may lead to an incremental growth in the number of women entrepreneurs.

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