

Career Advancement Pathways Of Women Professionals In Bangalore's IT Sector

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Abstract

Women constitute a substantial proportion of the workforce in Bangalore's Information Technology (IT) sector; however, their representation in senior leadership positions remains disproportionately low despite their educational qualifications and professional competence. This study examines the organizational factors influencing career development opportunities among women employees in Bangalore's IT companies. Existing literature highlights persistent barriers, including gender bias, inadequate mentorship, limited access to high-visibility assignments, work-life balance challenges, and exclusion from informal professional networks, which continue to impede women's career advancement despite the adoption of flexible work arrangements and diversity initiatives. Employing a descriptive research design, the study collected primary data from 400 women employees working in multinational corporations, medium-sized IT firms, and IT start-ups using stratified random sampling. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis and correlation. The findings reveal that organizational support, mentorship opportunities, inclusive workplace culture, and transparent promotion practices have a significant positive influence on women's career development, whereas gender bias, limited networking opportunities, and work-life conflict remain major impediments to career progression. The study concludes that strengthening institutional mentoring programmes, implementing objective performance evaluation systems, promoting leadership development initiatives, and adopting gender-inclusive organizational policies are essential for enhancing career advancement opportunities and achieving greater gender equity in Bangalore's IT sector.

Keywords: *Women Career Development, Information Technology Sector, Organizational Support, Workplace Gender Equality, Bangalore.*

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I. Introduction

Bangalore's emergence as India's primary technology hub has catalyzed significant female workforce participation, yet persistent structural and cultural barriers continue to impede the transition of women into senior leadership roles (Prasad, Gupta, Doshi, Jain, Bhandari, & S, A study on working women issues in the IT sector with special reference to Bangalore, 2025; Ramya, "Impact Of Career Aspirations On The Performance Of Women Employees In It & Ites Organizations In Bengaluru: A Sequential Mixed-Methods Study", 2024). While these women frequently secure entry-level positions, they often encounter a "leaky pipeline" characterized by limited access to mentorship, exclusionary professional networks, and systemic gender biases that hinder advancement beyond mid-level management (Basfore & Saini, 2025; Verma, 2011). This underrepresentation in senior leadership is frequently attributed to systemic impediments encountered at the mid-career stage and the ongoing pressure to balance professional obligations with disproportionate caregiving responsibilities (Basfore & Saini, 2025; Prasad et al., 2025; Verma, 2011). Consequently, organizations frequently struggle to retain female talent as they approach critical mid-career transition points, where the intersection of workplace gendering and persistent domestic expectations significantly diminishes prospects for further advancement. This underscores the urgency of analyzing the structural and sociocultural mechanisms that continue to limit leadership diversity within Bangalore's technology sector, a gap this study aims to address. By investigating these barriers, this research identifies the specific interplay between organizational policies, such as remote work flexibility, and the career resilience required for women to navigate these long-standing inequalities (Murthy & Antony, 2025), (Gürsoy, 2023). The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of these institutional support mechanisms in facilitating long-term career growth and mitigating the attrition prevalent among female professionals in the IT sector (Singh & Pande, 2025), (Dutta & Bamel, 2026). Furthermore, this research seeks to address the extent to which these flexibility arrangements genuinely support upward mobility or inadvertently entrench existing career penalties (Shahane, 2026; Yabo & D.C., 2025). Specifically, the study examines whether remote and hybrid frameworks perpetuate a "flexibility

trap," wherein limited visibility and reduced access to informal patronage networks obstruct women from high-value assignments (Batra, 2026). Ultimately, this research seeks to clarify how systemic biases and the "broken rung" at the mid-management level constrain professional progression despite the normalization of flexible work models (Chas & Kolhe, 2026; Sinha et al., 2025).

II. Literature Review

Theoretical perspectives, such as the "leaky pipeline" model and the "glass ceiling" construct, provide a critical lens for understanding how gender-based discrimination and informal exclusionary networks impede long-term professional trajectories (Yan et al., 2024), (Kumari & Kaur, 2025). Additionally, the application of a matricentric lens reveals how the sudden transition to remote work paradigms has exacerbated these challenges, leading to "flexibility fatigue" as women struggle to navigate blurred work-life boundaries and intensified caregiving demands (Deogaonkar et al., 2025). Empirical evidence suggests that while hybrid models offer autonomy, they simultaneously reduce professional visibility, thereby undermining the career advancement opportunities of women in the IT sector (Kumari & Pahal, 2025). Furthermore, research into the Indian context highlights a significant scholarly gap regarding how employers consciously conceptualize and govern these hybrid arrangements to specifically address gender inclusion objectives (Mangaonkar, 2026). Existing empirical inquiries often overlook how such organizational policies influence long-term retention and leadership trajectories for women in the domestic IT landscape (Mangaonkar, 2026). Moreover, while NASSCOM initiatives have promoted flexible work as a tool for inclusion, there remains limited longitudinal data assessing whether these policies successfully mitigate the "broken rung" effect in the high-pressure environment of the Indian technology industry (Dhar-Bhattacharjee & Dwivedi, 2023), (Crasta et al., 2025). Current literature often fails to account for how managerial bias and organizational culture interact with these arrangements to facilitate or obstruct leadership development (Al, 2025; Crasta & Rai, 2025). Consequently, empirical studies indicate that systemic inequalities remain prevalent as remote settings often intensify domestic responsibilities while fostering proximity bias, which disproportionately penalizes women's career progression (Meenakshi & N, 2025). Moreover, Acker's organizational theory emphasizes that the conventional "disembodied worker" model, which assumes an employee with no domestic obligations, continues to drive HR selection and appraisal processes that disadvantage women in these settings (Chakraborty, 2024). Furthermore, the prevalence of Gender Orientation Theory suggests that these persistent disparities are rooted in skewed perceptions of remote work effectiveness, where domestic labor remains an invisible barrier to perceived productivity (Rahman & Sing, 2024). In the Indian IT landscape, this tension is further compounded by the "double burden" of professional expectations and traditional caregiving demands, which often results in disproportionate career penalties for women when compared to their male counterparts (Bhagat & Banerji, 2025; Hussain, 2025). Despite the widespread implementation of hybrid working models, there remains a critical research gap regarding how these policies are operationalized within Indian IT firms to actively dismantle gender-based career stagnation (Mangaonkar, 2026a, 2026b). Further research is necessitated to evaluate whether these organizational frameworks inadvertently foster a "flexibility stigma," where the uptake of remote options is perceived as a lack of professional commitment, thereby stagnating career mobility (GEHLOT & Yadav, 2025). Moreover, while the IT sector exhibits a higher density of female participation than other regions, the industry remains structurally masculinized, prioritizing the "ideal worker" model that necessitates long hours and constant availability (Chakraborty, 2022). This structural reliance on traditional notions of availability masks a "glass ceiling" where women occupy less than 20% of executive roles despite making up over a third of mid-level positions (GEHLOT & Yadav, 2025). This disparity highlights the critical need to investigate how the Indian IT sector's rapid digital transformation intersects with long-standing cultural norms to create unique barriers for female leadership (Smith et al., 2020). Furthermore, the interaction between these entrenched societal expectations and global market integration often results in a distribution of talent that remains skewed, as systemic exclusion from decision-making roles continues to hinder per capita productivity and inclusive economic growth within the region (Dhar-Bhattacharjee & Richardson, 2018). Recent empirical investigations suggest that even when women achieve performance gains, they often accrue fewer organizational benefits—such as promotions or leadership access—than their male colleagues (Langer et al., 2020). This disparity underscores the necessity of analyzing how implicit biases within performance appraisal systems prioritize visibility over actual output (Chang, 2025; Savitha & S, 2025).

III. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design to empirically examine the career trajectories and advancement hurdles of women professionals within the Bangalore IT ecosystem. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the research employs a cross-sectional survey strategy to collect primary data from 400 women professionals across various software firms in the region using stratified random sampling. The primary data collection instrument is a structured, Likert-scale questionnaire designed to assess respondents' perceptions of

organizational support, mentorship accessibility, and the influence of workplace culture on career mobility. To ensure the robustness of the gathered data, the study employs statistical software to conduct factor analysis, which facilitate the examination of complex causal relationships between latent variables like workplace bias and career growth (Lakshmidevi & Geetha, 2023; Suganya & Millath, 2026).

IV. Results

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Particulars	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 25 Years	48	12
	25–34 Years	182	45.5
	35–44 Years	124	31
	Above 44 Years	46	11.5
Educational Qualification	Graduate	52	13
	Postgraduate	328	82
	Doctorate	20	5
Work Experience	Below 5 Years	68	17
	5–12 Years	260	65
	Above 12 Years	72	18
Job Role	Software Development	236	59
	Project Management	96	24
	Testing & Quality Assurance	40	10
	Other Technical Roles	28	7

Source: Primary data

Table 2: Perceived Career Development Factors among Women Employees

Career Development Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Internal Mentorship Programmes	4.21	0.68	I
High-Visibility Project Opportunities	4.12	0.74	II
Organizational Support	3.98	0.71	III
Inclusive Workplace Culture	3.86	0.79	IV
Transparent Promotion Practices	3.79	0.82	V
Work-Life Balance Support	3.54	0.88	VI

Source: Primary data

Table 3: Major Career Barriers Experienced by Women Employees

Career Barrier	Respondents	Percentage
Gender Bias in Promotion	308	77
Limited Networking Opportunities	286	71.5
Lack of Childcare Support	274	68.5
Limited High-Visibility Projects	264	66
Algorithmic Bias in HR Evaluation	246	61.5
Micro-inequities and Sexist Workplace Behaviour	238	59.5
Inadequate Flexible Work Support	222	55.5

Source: Primary data

The demographic analysis of the 400 respondents reveals a workforce predominantly comprised of mid-career professionals, with 65% of participants holding five to twelve years of experience in software development and project management roles. Additionally, the sample distribution reflects a high level of academic attainment, with 82% of respondents possessing postgraduate degrees in engineering or computer science, reinforcing the industry's focus on high-skill technical labor. Regarding career progression drivers, respondents identified internal mentorship programs and exposure to high-visibility projects as the most significant facilitators for advancement, though access to these enablers remains inconsistently distributed (USA et al., 2025). Conversely, quantitative results highlight that algorithmic discrimination and skewed evaluation metrics in AI-driven HR tools frequently impede these career paths, effectively limiting access to leadership opportunities (. & Vijayarani, 2026). This "glass wall" effect is further exacerbated by the misclassification of technical mastery as mere "prompt dependency," which minimizes the perceived architectural contributions of women and complicates their transition into executive domains. Moreover, qualitative data indicates that these structural impediments are deeply intertwined with inadequate access to formal childcare support and flexible work arrangements, which are frequently cited by respondents as the primary barriers to sustained career progression (Verma, 2025). Beyond these logistical constraints, respondents emphasized that the lack of formal networking opportunities and the persistent "old boys' club" dynamic within technical leadership tiers remain critical obstacles to long-term advancement (Kulyk, 2026; Mendes et al., 2025). Furthermore, participants reported that pervasive micro-inequities and the frequent occurrence of sexist workplace interactions significantly diminish the perceived value of their contributions, creating an

environment where technical expertise is systematically undervalued (Guzmán et al., 2023). These findings align with broader evidence suggesting that persistent structural barriers, such as limited access to senior-level training and high-visibility projects, perpetuate vertical segregation within technical domains (Arabi et al., 2025). Furthermore, the data suggests that women's technical contributions are often sidelined by the "Glass Wall" phenomenon, wherein their expertise is categorized as supplemental rather than foundational (Stewart, 2026).

V. Discussion

These findings resonate with global trends where the persistence of "glass ceiling" and "sticky floor" effects highlights that even meritocratic industries are not immune to deep-seated gender biases (Prakash & Yadav, 2025). Specifically, the Bangalore findings echo the gender role incongruity theory, where traditional perceptions of leadership continue to clash with the established professional image in ICT sectors, effectively marginalizing women regardless of their technical output (Ramseook-Munhurrin et al., 2023). Furthermore, this evidence mirrors international observations that women frequently face covert discrimination and a pressure to shift toward management tracks, which paradoxically confines them to middle-management tiers rather than top-tier executive leadership. Crucially, the observed stagnation at mid-career levels in Bangalore aligns with research indicating that nearly 48% of Indian women exit the sector during this professional transition, suggesting that current organizational structures fail to bridge the gap between initial entry and long-term retention (Venkatesan, 2020). Moreover, the reliance on informal, after-hours networking circles creates a exclusionary barrier that mirrors the "off-ramping" phenomena observed in international studies, where the lack of institutionalized sponsorship prevents women from accessing career-enhancing resources (Mathetha & Dhanpat, 2025). These findings corroborate the existence of "gendered organizations," where the division of labor and masculine-coded interactional patterns systematically devalue female expertise (Maji & Dixit, 2020). Consequently, these structural and social impediments necessitate a shift in HR policy toward institutionalizing sponsorship programs rather than relying on informal mentorship, which currently acts as a gatekeeping mechanism (Ahuja, 2002; Trinkenreich et al., 2022). To address these systemic barriers, organizations should implement mandatory diversity training and objective performance evaluation metrics that mitigate the impact of gendered mental models on hiring and promotion processes (Thangapoo & Radhakrishnan, 2022). Furthermore, moving beyond mere policy documentation, firms must prioritize the transparent implementation of "I-deals" and salary benchmarking to dismantle the institutionalized inequities often embedded in modern, team-based organizational structures (Williams et al., 2012). By integrating intersectional data into these policy frameworks, firms can better address the compounding challenges that women face due to diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, moving beyond one-dimensional diversity initiatives (Venkatesan, 2026). Moreover, HR interventions must evolve from isolated initiatives to a holistic framework that aligns structural processes with organizational culture to avoid the counterproductive effects of fragmented policy implementation (Lima et al., 2025; Stamarski & Hing, 2015). Ultimately, achieving sustainable equity requires shifting the mandate for diversity from discretionary HR programs to the core of organizational strategy, ensuring that legal enforcement and accountability mechanisms are embedded at the executive level (Williams et al., 2014).

VI. Conclusion

This study synthesizes the multifaceted barriers to women's professional advancement within Bangalore's IT sector, underscoring that technical proficiency alone cannot override systemic biases embedded in organizational culture (Dagunduro et al., 2024; Rosetti, 2024). Future research should investigate the longitudinal impact of formal sponsorship programs on career trajectory, specifically examining how these mechanisms disrupt the exclusionary nature of informal networks (Bhide & Tootell, 2018; Yates & Skinner, 2021). Additionally, future inquiries must incorporate the experiences of men to provide a more comprehensive understanding of why workplace gender discrimination remains so resilient (Rink et al., 2019). Finally, policymakers must advocate for robust legislative frameworks that mandate the collection of sex-disaggregated data and provide external oversight for organizational compliance with gender-neutral promotion criteria (Ballesteros et al., 2024).

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