

# Impact of ICT on enhancement in career opportunity for women

Hetal Chudasama<sup>1\*</sup>, Neha Patel<sup>2</sup>, Zankhana Shah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>IT, MBICT, India

<sup>2</sup>Civil Engineering, BVM, India

<sup>3</sup>IT, BVM, India

## Abstract

*Incorporation of women towards digital era through ICT will definitely lead them towards a sustainable career and ever growing and superior opportunities in their future. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an amalgamation of various types of tools and technologies that provides an ease of access to even physically remote digital information. It has brought a technological revolution in this world of digitization. In this paper, We have first represent some the facts about position of women in workforce represented through statistical analysis by various ministries and bodies. Then, we have discussed challenges being faced by women in building their career, its solution through ICT and list of various projects being carried out by governments of various countries to support women and to enhance job opportunities of women in each of the sectors through ICT to make them independent, confident and self esteemed.*

**Keywords:** ICT, digital era

## INTRODUCTION

The Global Gender Report 2015 by the World Economic Forum ranked India at 139 out of 145 countries, in terms of economic participation of women [1]. According to one of the recent World Bank reports published by Hindustan Times, e-paper, dated Monday, Apr 30, 2018, it says that “India ranks 120th among 131 nations in women workforce” [2]. The report highlighted that India’s potential GDP growth rate can be boosted by a percentage point if women participation increased. It has been also found that only 23.7 percent of eligible Indian women are part of the workforce compare to that of 75 percent of men [3]. It has been even pointed out recently by Indian Finance Minister Mr. Arun Jaitley that the lower participation of women in economic activities adversely affects the growth potential of the Indian economy [4]. Only 27% Indian women are in the labor force—the lowest among BRICS countries; among G-20 countries, IndiaSpend reported on April 9, 2016 [5].

All these statistic analytical figures illustrate the fact that in Indian economy or GDP rate, contribution of female is very less compared to male. It seems that employment ratio of female to male is very imbalance. Reason of such a huge gender gap and unemployability for women compared to male is their unawareness about technologies being used now days and more challenges being faced by women compare to men. In next section we will discussed about challenges being faced by female in rural and urban area, it’s solution through ICT and some of the initiatives already taken up by governments of various countries to enhance the involvement of women in the work force. Women are actually engine of Indian economy, but it has been always ignored.

## Challenges faced by women

Reason behind less employability of women is various challenges being faced by them. Here, we discuss some the major challenges among those.

Education plays a key role in multifaceted development of the society. And women play a major role in progress of any country through the progress of its society. So, basic education to girls is crucial requirement of each country.

But, still there are some regions all over the world where girl children are deprived from getting basic education. Girls are not being considered to have equal right of education as boys. This situation arises because their family members are not aware about importance of education to girl child in the development of their family, community, entire society and finally a whole country. So, overall **high rate of illiteracy among girls** prevents them from making their career ahead. So, it directly leads to lack of skill, experience and education in women.

Other challenge being faced is work-life balance. Though many women have necessary basic education and skill but they cannot continue with their further study because of financial problems being faced by their family. They do not want to spend the money on her career as they are accumulating that money for her marriage. Or, an educated married women may not continue with her career due to lack of support from her family members or stereotype views of society about assigning responsible role of housekeeping to only women and not men. So, these household responsibilities may prevent them from full time participation in the job. Sometimes women will leave the job while she is on the top of her career as she has to give priority to her family life compared to her professional life. She has to sacrifice her career. Women are expected to take up more family responsibilities than men. This may be especially so in Asia, where **familial commitment and values** are deeply entrenched in the culture. To balance work and family is considered as to ranked challenge being faced by women in developed country.

A working woman who is also a mother from nuclear family, find it's difficult to get trustworthy caretaker for her children. Various cases of kidnapping, child abusing, rape makes a mother always worried about her child even at the workplace. Due to **lack of proper childcare facility or nurseries**, women cannot dedicatedly get involved in their work.

Now days, more and more cases of sexual harassment, physical assault and abusing are being reported. It creates a type of phobia inside women to keep themselves away from any such ambitious thoughts or joining such a workplace. Some times when women phase any such persecution, she would prefer to leave the current job instead raise a voice against any such nuisance. So, this **state of insecurity** face by women is also major challenge for women. It is a very sensitive issue being face by specifically young women at their workplace and must be taken care by the society.

In some of the jobs, employee needs to work in shift duty or night shift. Sometimes, offshore or client meeting at awkward time may not be suitable to a woman employee. To stay late night at office place to complete the assigned projects before deadline may not be as easy for all women as it is for men. **Uncomfortable job timing** is also one of the notable reasons for women for not accepting a specific job.

Many people commute everyday to reach to their job place. To commute everyday might not be an easy task in absence of proper transportation facility. Some ruler areas still geographically separated from nearby area. **Lack of proper commuting facility** is also one of the obstacles for women to accept the distant job opportunities. Or, this may also happen due to unawareness about available commuting facility from nearby area.

Still, women live in a place where they cannot easily access computer or other such device to use internet to get in touch with world around and to get an idea about actual job scope and opportunities in different fields. So, such **infrastructure access imbalance** adversely affects their economic development.

Major problem still being faced by women at various places are **gender biasing**. Women are not getting the same opportunities in the job as like men. Some of the managerial level or decision making jobs in corporate world are still being considered more appropriate for men even though women can do the same job with same efficiency. At some places, women are not getting same pay scale, perks and opportunities as their male colleagues. This gender discrimination leads to increased stress and job dissatisfaction by women at workplace.

Other challenge is **lack of empathy and understanding** from the system when a woman take career breaks or sabbaticals or maternity leave and get back to work. The system does not consider the break fairly and they make feel a woman uneasy or uncomfortable.

All these major problems can be solved by making women aware about ICT technologies.

### Solution through ICT

**High rate of illiteracy among girls** can be overcome by making them more aware about importance of education. Families from remote areas can be make ware of importance of education in the life of a girl child by making inspirational short films, motivational speech by renowned female personality and **projecting** it on the big screen in their village. Even video conferencing session can be arranged in local languages to guide such families by the appropriate personality. Such type of **live conversation, video calls** can make them aware about need of education. **Digital hoardings** with display of continuous inspirational content can make them think about it. Such ICT technologies are effective ways to spread awareness about education in people.

Education is the main source of all types of enhancement of a society. And, education to women can contribute a lot to the society. ICT is such a powerful tool which can provides ease of access to education. It provides from basic to advanced learning material at any distance place through **e-learning**. ICT provides **online education** system. Using which, any person can have access to education

without even going to school. And main advantage is they can learn the course at any time without any time constraint. Many universities are also introducing distance learning courses where students can get the degree by attending on-line courses, appear for the exams, clear your exams and get certificate. This degree will be helpful to get the job. So, with such a technology, problem of time constraints, can be solved. In some of the paid on-line courses payment charges can be shared by group of people and in such a way financial problem can be also solve.

Employee also gets work from home facility. In some of constraints, where employees are not able to go to job place, they can even do their work from their home without going to the office. So, this **teleworking** facility provides an equal opportunity for women to be fully involved in the professional work also. By working from home, they can balance their home-office life.

Women can also begin their carrier through **a Startup** where they also get some funded help from the government. Women can start their career by converting their though process into implementation. It can boost up their confidence level. This startup can be online selling, deploying projects, app and website developing and many such jobs where women does not need to do any huge investment and they can start their business with their own skill work. And it can be started even from their home. So, financial or commuting problem will be also solved.

ICT can help girls to overcome the problem of **State of insecurity**. Many mobile applications provide on hand facility to help girls in any such unsafe situation. 181 Abhayam women helpline, Help me, Himmat, bSafe, CitizenCop, Hawk Eye – Telangana Police, VithU: V Gumrah Initiative, Smart 24 X 7, Tell Tail, My Safetipin, Raksha[6] and many more are all women safety applications which can be easily installed on your cell phones. These applications will allow them to inform to and alert nearby police station or their guardian or friends about their unsafe condition. Or may share the location or send alert message in any such emergency situation.

**E-governance and e-shopping** has made day to day life of every person very easy. Using all the facilities like online bill payment for all most all the facilities, online fees payment, online money transfer, online enquiry about any such matter, online shopping has made women free from all these tedious task include physical presence at all such places. So, women can utilize and concentrate all such time in their office work. It may reduce the burden of **familial commitment and values on the women**.

ICT provides facility to get connected to your home through **surveillance camera** to get rid of over thinking about the family while away from home. Through this interconnection you can always remain connected to your home and you can have a look at different kind of views inside your room and you can be aware and warned of any intruder or suspicious activity at your home in your absence. It will make a woman free of **childcare issue**.

ICT provides unbiased access to the technology for men as well as women. Digital divide is inefficient and not enough access to digital technology. ICT can also bridge this gap of digital divide by providing various easy ways to access digital technologies.

ICT provides facility like internet, projecting, video conferencing, distant connecting, remote data sharing, and electronic gadgets like smart phones, smart TVs, laptops and such a long list of technologies has evolved as a boon to empower the women in this digital era.

Since last decade, lots of work has been done to make women aware about their overall empowerment through the use of ICT. It solves the problem of time, money as well as distance. Lots of other on-hand, economic technologies are available which can be helpful to women to overcome challenges and build up their carrier by breaking this glass barrier.

Few of the various projects being carried out by the governments from various countries is listed here[7].

In countries like Korea, even government has taken initiative to train the house wives as well working women on ICT strategies to contribute to enhance the employability of women work force. So, women can enhance their career opportunities through the use of ICT.

In India, government has come with program like “Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act” (MGNREGA) to push female employment. Successive governments have also long supported schemes like STEP where one-third of the employment opportunities are set aside for women.

In Uganda, CD ROM entitled “Rural Women in Africa: Ideas for Earning Money” was prepared in the local language for rural women for access to information. And this project has contributed to their economic empowerment and demonstrated that ICT can be used in creative and effective ways.

“Grameen Phone Program” in Bangladesh, “Development Through Radio Program” in Zimbabwe, and the deployment of competitive wireless options in Bolivia and Dominican Republic, particularly for women in the informal sector are other such programs and initiatives that demonstrated how ICT can be used as an instrument for women’s economic empowerment.

Cisco Systems and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, implemented a project named “InfoDev”, which provided training in Internet networking technology and scholarships for young women throughout Africa. As a result, trainees gained enormous self-confidence and self-esteem.

New York State provided customized computer training tailored to job market opportunities for women living in urban, suburban and rural areas. Malaysian government ministries provide loans and grants for women entrepreneurs in Information Technology in order to increase women’s participation in the industry.

In Uruguay, NGO run by women gives ICT training to boys and girls from poor urban areas to build up their career in building media projects and graphic design boutiques.

In Korea, the Ministry of Information and Communication make large number of housewives aware about use of computer and internet. The Ministry of Labor provides computer training for unemployed women, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development are planning to improve IT skills of girl students from elementary through high school.

Various such programs are still going on to enhance the career opportunity for women.

## CONCLUSIONS

Growth rate of Indian economy can be made more powerful by increasing the contribution of women in Indian economy by providing enough opportunity to women to build their career in various fields by intruding them various ICT tools. Some more projects need to be come up with awareness about ICT in work-force for women in rural area to promote more women for education and job.

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