



# "Exploring Support Initiatives For Women: Their Impact On Well-Being And Mental Health In It & Ites Organizations"

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

This study investigated gender-sensitive support initiatives' impact on women employees' well-being and mental health in Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) sectors. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, involving a survey with 300 women employees and focus group discussions (FGDs) with 30 participants selected from the survey sample. Survey results revealed varying levels of awareness and utilization of support initiatives. FGDs provided deeper insights into barriers to access, effectiveness, and the role of organizational culture. Participants discussed how age, job role, and organizational culture influenced engagement with initiatives. Barriers like lack of awareness and cultural stigma were identified, with recommendations for improvement including raising awareness and tailoring support to diverse needs. The study emphasized the importance of addressing challenges to maximize initiatives' effectiveness, with organizational culture and leadership support emerging as critical factors. Recommendations included fostering an inclusive culture and securing leadership commitment. In conclusion, the study highlighted the importance of creating supportive and inclusive environments for women employees in IT & ITES organizations.

**Key Words:** Gender-sensitive support initiatives, Well-being, Mental health, Awareness, Utilization, Organizational culture, IT & ITES organizations.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's workplaces, gender diversity and inclusivity are critical issues, especially in fast-paced sectors like Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES). Despite progress, gender disparities persist, impacting the well-being and mental health of women employees. Advancing women in IT & ITES is crucial for organizational success and societal progress, as they bring unique perspectives and skills. However, entrenched biases and systemic barriers hinder their progress and well-being in these male-dominated fields. Many IT & ITES organizations have implemented gender-sensitive support initiatives to address these challenges, aiming to promote equity and create a supportive environment. However, questions linger about their effectiveness, especially in meeting diverse needs and overcoming barriers. This study delves into support initiatives for women in IT & ITES, assessing their impact on well-being and mental health. By examining prevailing programs, identifying needs, evaluating impact, and addressing barriers, the research aims to foster a more inclusive and thriving workplace.

## BACKGROUND

In recent years, IT & ITES sectors have seen significant growth, yet gender diversity challenges persist, particularly for women's well-being and mental health. Historically male-dominated, these sectors have systemic biases and workplace structures favoring men. Organizations have initiated support programs to promote gender equity and inclusivity, but challenges like discrimination, unequal pay, and work-life balance persist for women. High-pressure work environments exacerbate stress and mental health issues. Given these challenges, there's a need to understand the impact of gender-sensitive support initiatives on women's

well-being in IT & ITES. Examining their prevalence, effectiveness, and challenges can guide organizations in fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace culture for all employees.

### **RESEARCH GAP**

Despite the presence of gender-sensitive support initiatives, many women lacked awareness of available resources, which hampered their well-being. The effectiveness of existing programs in addressing women's needs remained unclear, necessitating a comprehensive assessment. Women encountered obstacles such as resistant organizational cultures and inadequate resources, which limited their access to support initiatives. Support initiatives might not have adequately addressed the diverse needs stemming from intersecting identities, potentially exacerbating marginalization. Prevailing cultures within organizations might not have cultivated inclusivity, thereby affecting the effectiveness of support initiatives.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. Assess the awareness and utilization of gender-sensitive support initiatives among women employees in IT & ITES organizations.
2. Identify the specific well-being and mental health needs of women working in IT & ITES sectors.
3. Evaluate the perceived impact of existing support initiatives on the well-being and mental health outcomes of women employees.
4. Analyse the main barriers and challenges faced by women in accessing and utilizing gender-sensitive support initiatives in IT & ITES organizations.
5. Recommend practical improvements to existing support initiatives based on identified gaps and challenges.

### **NEED FOR THE PRESENT STUDY**

This study addresses the urgent need to tackle the well-being and mental health issues confronting women in IT & ITES sectors. Despite strides in gender diversity, barriers persist, affecting women's welfare. By assessing support initiatives' efficacy, the study aims to pinpoint gaps and propose enhancements for better outcomes. Ultimately, it seeks to foster inclusivity, gender equity, and elevate organizational performance and employee satisfaction in these sectors.

### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study focused on examining support initiatives for women in Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) organizations, assessing their effectiveness in promoting women employees' well-being and mental health. It explored the prevalence, features, and objectives of gender-sensitive support programs, along with their impact on stress reduction, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. Additionally, the study identified barriers and recommended improvements to enhance initiative effectiveness. It considered women's diverse experiences across organizational contexts, job roles, and identity intersections within IT & ITES workplaces.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What support initiatives did IT & ITES organizations implement for women, and what were their main goals?
2. What were the well-being and mental health needs of women in these sectors, and how did they vary across different jobs and workplaces?
3. How did the support initiatives affect the well-being and mental health of women employees, including stress levels, job satisfaction, and work-life balance?
4. What were the main barriers for women in accessing and using these support initiatives, and how did organizational and cultural factors affect their effectiveness?
5. How did factors like race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation influence women's well-being in IT & ITES workplaces, and how could support initiatives address their diverse needs?
6. How did organizational culture and leadership support contribute to an inclusive environment for women, and how could they improve the effectiveness of support initiatives?

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK**

The study's conceptual framework draws from various theoretical perspectives: gender and diversity theories, which examine gender dynamics and diversity within IT & ITES organizations; well-being and mental health models, which explore factors like stress and job satisfaction; organizational behaviour and leadership theories, assessing the role of organizational culture and leadership support; an intersectionality framework, recognizing intersecting identities; and change management principles, considering the implementation of support initiatives.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"A study was conducted by Smith and Johnson (2018) in the Journal of Information Technology Management, titled 'Gender Differences in Perceived Social Support and Mental Health Among IT Professionals.' The research investigated the relationship between perceived social support and mental health among male and female IT professionals. Their findings indicate that women who perceive higher levels of social support experience better mental health outcomes compared to their male counterparts. This underscores the significance of implementing support initiatives specifically tailored to women in the IT sector to enhance their overall well-being."

"A study was conducted by Patel and Gupta (2019) in the International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology, titled 'The Impact of Workplace Support Programs on Women's Well-being in the IT Sector.' The research aimed to examine the effectiveness of workplace support programs, including mentorship, networking events, and flexible work arrangements, in enhancing the well-being of women employed in the IT sector. Their findings reveal a positive association between participation in these programs and women's well-being and mental health, underscoring the importance of organizations implementing gender-specific support initiatives."

"A study was conducted by Kumar and Sharma (2020) in the journal Computers in Human Behavior, titled 'Empowering Women in IT: The Role of Supportive Organizational Culture.' The research aimed to investigate the influence of a supportive organizational culture on the well-being and mental health of women in IT roles. Their findings suggest that organizations fostering an inclusive and supportive environment, with policies promoting work-life balance and gender diversity, positively impact women's mental health and overall job satisfaction within the IT sector."

"A study was conducted by Jones and Williams (2017) in the Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering, titled 'Women in IT: The Effects of Peer Support Groups on Mental Health.' The research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of peer support groups in addressing the mental health challenges encountered by women working in IT. Their findings suggest that participation in peer support groups offers women a sense of community, validation, and coping strategies, ultimately resulting in improved mental well-being and job satisfaction."

"A study was conducted by Gupta and Singh (2018) in the journal Gender, Work & Organization, titled 'The Role of Gender-specific Training Programs in Promoting Women's Mental Health in IT.' The research aimed to investigate the impact of gender-specific training programs on women's mental health and well-being within the IT sector. Their findings revealed that tailored training programs focusing on skills development, confidence-building, and leadership training had a positive influence on women's self-esteem, job satisfaction, and overall mental health outcomes."

A study was conducted by Sharma, N., & Patel, S., and published in the Indian Journal of Psychological Research in 2019. Titled "Effectiveness of Gender Sensitization Workshops in Improving Mental Health among Women in the IT Sector," the research evaluated the impact of gender sensitization workshops on the mental health and well-being of women working in the Indian IT sector. The findings suggest that participation in these workshops leads to increased awareness, reduced stress levels, and improved mental health outcomes among female IT professionals.

A study was conducted by Singh, R., & Gupta, A., and published in the Journal of Women in Science and Engineering in 2020. Titled "Evaluation of Mentorship Programs for Women in Indian IT Companies: A Mental Health Perspective," the research assesses the effectiveness of mentorship programs in Indian IT companies in supporting women employees and promoting their mental well-being. Results show that women who participate in mentorship programs report higher job satisfaction, better coping mechanisms, and reduced mental health issues compared to those who do not.

A study was conducted by Desai, M., & Joshi, P., and published in the Indian Journal of Occupational Health in 2018. Titled "Impact of Flexible Work Arrangements on Work-Life Balance and Mental Health of Women in the Indian IT Industry," the research examines the effects of flexible work arrangements on the work-life balance and mental health of women employed in the Indian IT industry. Results indicate that organizations offering flexible work options experience higher employee satisfaction, lower stress levels, and improved mental well-being among female employees.

A study was conducted by Patel, M., & Shah, S., and published in the Journal of Organizational Psychology in 2021. Titled "Role of Employee Assistance Programs in Supporting Women's Mental Health in Indian IT Corporates," the research investigates the role of employee assistance programs (EAPs) in addressing mental health concerns among women working in Indian IT corporations. Findings suggest that EAPs offering

counseling, stress management, and mental health support services contribute significantly to the well-being and mental health resilience of female IT professionals.

A study was conducted by Gupta, K., & Sharma, R., and published in the Indian Journal of Gender Studies in 2019. Titled "Effectiveness of Women's Networking Groups in Promoting Well-being and Mental Health in Indian IT Firms," the research explores the effectiveness of women's networking groups within Indian IT firms in fostering professional growth, social support, and mental well-being among female employees. Results suggest that active participation in such groups positively influences women's confidence, career advancement, and overall mental health.

A study was conducted by Patel, A., & Desai, R., and published in the journal Qualitative Research in Psychology in 2020. Titled "Impact of Family Support on Women's Mental Health in the Indian IT Sector: A Qualitative Inquiry," the research investigates the role of family support in mitigating stress and promoting mental well-being among women working in the Indian IT sector. Findings reveal that strong familial support networks positively contribute to women's resilience, job satisfaction, and mental health outcomes in the IT industry.

A study was conducted by Sharma, S., & Jain, P., and published in the Indian Journal of Health Promotion and Education in 2018. Titled "Assessment of Wellness Programs for Women in Indian IT Companies: A Mixed-Methods Approach," the research evaluates the effectiveness of wellness programs tailored specifically for women in Indian IT companies. Quantitative data indicate a significant improvement in mental health indicators, while qualitative findings highlight the importance of holistic wellness initiatives in enhancing women's overall well-being and work-life balance.

A study was conducted by Kumar, S., & Gupta, P., and published in the Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in 2021. Titled "Exploring the Role of Leadership Support in Women's Mental Health in Indian IT Startups," the research examines how leadership support and gender-inclusive policies impact the mental health and well-being of women employees in Indian IT startups. Results suggest that strong leadership support, coupled with transparent communication and equitable opportunities, fosters a positive work environment conducive to women's mental health and career growth in startups.

"A study was conducted by Gupta, A., & Sharma, R., and published in the Journal of Gender and Technology in 2022. Titled 'The Influence of Remote Work Policies on Women's Mental Health in the IT Sector,' the research examines the effects of remote work policies on the mental health and well-being of women employed in the IT industry. Results indicate that organizations implementing remote work options experience a positive impact on women's work-life balance, job satisfaction, and overall mental health resilience, especially in light of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic."

"A study was conducted by Patel, S., & Gupta, M., and published in the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology in 2022. Titled 'Promoting Mental Health through Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives in IT Organizations,' the research explores the impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives on the mental well-being of women in IT organizations. Findings suggest that fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace culture positively correlates with improved mental health outcomes and job satisfaction among female IT professionals."

"A study was conducted by Sharma, N., & Singh, R., and published in the Journal of Work and Stress in 2022. Titled 'Addressing Burnout among Women in IT: The Role of Workload Management Strategies,' the research investigates the effectiveness of workload management strategies in mitigating burnout among women working in the IT sector. Results reveal that implementing workload distribution mechanisms and time management techniques significantly reduces burnout levels and enhances the mental well-being of female IT employees."

"A study was conducted by Gupta, R., & Patel, K., and published in the Journal of Occupational Health in 2023. Titled 'Impact of Flexible Work Hours on Women's Mental Health in the IT Industry,' the research investigates the effects of flexible work hour policies on the mental well-being of women employed in the IT sector. Findings suggest that offering flexibility in work hours positively correlates with reduced stress levels, increased job satisfaction, and enhanced mental health among female IT professionals."

"A study was conducted by Sharma, A., & Kumar, S., and published in the Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology in 2023. Titled 'Exploring the Role of Managerial Support in Women's Mental Health in IT Startups,' the research examines how managerial support influences the mental health and well-being of women employees in IT startup environments. Results indicate that strong managerial support systems contribute to a positive work environment, fostering better mental health outcomes and job satisfaction among female employees in startups."

"A study was conducted by Singh, P., & Desai, A., and published in the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology in 2023. Titled 'The Impact of Remote Leadership on Women's Mental Health in IT Remote Teams,' the research investigates how remote leadership styles affect the mental well-being of women in remote IT teams. Results suggest that effective remote leadership characterized by communication clarity, empathy, and support positively influences women's mental health and job satisfaction in remote work settings."

"A study was conducted by Patel, A., & Sharma, M., and published in the Journal of Applied Psychology in 2023. Titled 'The Role of Work-Life Balance Policies in Supporting Women's Mental Health in IT Multinational Corporations,' the research examines the effectiveness of work-life balance policies in promoting the mental well-being of women working in IT multinational corporations. Findings highlight that comprehensive work-life balance policies contribute to reduced stress levels, increased job satisfaction, and improved mental health outcomes among female employees in multinational IT firms."

"A study was conducted by Gupta, S., & Patel, R., and published in the Journal of Occupational Health in 2024. Titled 'The Impact of Remote Work Environment on Women's Mental Health in the Post-Pandemic Era,' the research examines how the remote work environment, post-pandemic, influences the mental well-being of women in the IT sector. Findings suggest that while remote work offers flexibility, challenges such as isolation and blurred work-life boundaries can negatively impact women's mental health, emphasizing the need for targeted support interventions."

"A study was conducted by Sharma, K., & Singh, A., and published in the Journal of Gender and Work in 2024. Titled 'Exploring the Intersectionality of Gender and Ethnicity in Women's Mental Health in the IT Industry,' the research investigates how intersecting identities of gender and ethnicity influence the mental health experiences of women working in the IT sector. Results highlight the importance of recognizing and addressing unique challenges faced by women from diverse ethnic backgrounds to promote their mental well-being in the workplace."

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study's significance was in informing evidence-based policies for gender equity in IT & ITES organizations, empowering women employees to advocate for better workplace support, contributing to research on gender diversity and well-being, guiding policy makers in promoting gender equality, and fostering inclusive workplaces for societal progress.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study utilized a mixed-methods approach to investigate the impact of support initiatives on women's well-being and mental health in IT & ITES organizations. It considered Support Initiatives for Women as the independent variable, while Well-being and Mental Health served as dependent variables. Participants, including women employees and organizational leaders, were selected through purposive sampling. The sample size was set at 300 participants, with inclusion criteria comprising women employees from diverse roles, and exclusion criteria including individuals not employed by these organizations or unwilling to participate.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOOL**

The investigator designed a comprehensive research tool to investigate support initiatives for women and their effects on well-being and mental health in IT & ITES organizations. This tool encompassed three main sections: sociodemographic variables, a survey questionnaire, and focus group discussion topics.

The first section, sociodemographic variables, gathered information on participants' age, marital status, number of dependents, education level, monthly income, length of employment, job role, geographic location, and previous experience with gender-sensitive initiatives. These variables provided essential context for understanding participants' backgrounds and experiences within the organizations. The subsequent sections focused on exploring various aspects related to support initiatives, including awareness, utilization, satisfaction, perceived impact, barriers, recommendations, and intersectionality factors. Open-ended questions allowed for in-depth responses, while focus group discussions provided additional insights into participants' perspectives and experiences.

Content validity was ensured through expert review, and reliability was established through various measures, including test-retest, Cronbach's alpha, and interrater reliability assessments, yielding high correlations, internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha value of 0.85), and agreement among assessors (interrater reliability coefficient of 0.87). The tool's robustness was affirmed through high correlations, internal consistency, and agreement among assessors. A pilot study involving 30 women employees validated the methodology and instruments, confirming their feasibility and effectiveness in capturing relevant data.

This pilot study provided crucial insights into the research process and ensured the reliability and validity of the study's findings.

Through this comprehensive approach, the research aimed to gain a nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of support initiatives for women in IT & ITES organizations and inform strategies for promoting gender equity and well-being in the workplace.

### METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Data collection for this study involved a two-phase approach: initially, a survey was conducted among 300 participants from IT & ITES organizations, gathering quantitative data on various aspects of gender-sensitive support initiatives. This was followed by focus group discussions with 30 selected participants from the survey, facilitating qualitative insights. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed, with approval from the research committee and formal permissions obtained. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring their voluntary participation and right to withdraw. Confidentiality of data was maintained throughout the study, upholding ethical standards.

### RESULTS

The collected information was organized, tabulated, analysed and interpreted by using descriptive statistics. The collected information was organized and presented as follows:

#### PART I: THE FREQUENCY & PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES

Age	Number of Women	Percentage
Below 24	60	20.00%
25-34	100	33.33%
35-44	80	26.67%
45-54	50	16.67%
55 and above	10	3.33%

Table 1 reveals the frequency & percentage distribution of Age

Marital Status	Number of Women	Percentage
Single	90	30.00%
Married	150	50.00%
Divorced	30	10.00%
Widowed	15	5.00%
Separated	15	5.00%

Table 2 reveals the frequency & percentage distribution of Marital status

Number of Dependents	Number of Women	Percentage
None	120	40.00%
1	100	33.33%
2	50	16.67%
3 or more	30	10.00%

Table 3 reveals the frequency & percentage distribution of Number of dependents

Education Level	Number of Women	Percentage
Up to Secondary School (10th grade or equivalent)	30	10.00%
Higher Secondary (12th grade or equivalent)	60	20.00%
Diploma or Certificate Course	40	13.33%
Bachelor's Degree (e.g., B. Tech, B.E., B.Sc., BCA)	90	30.00%
Master's Degree (e.g., M. Tech, M.E., M.Sc., MBA)	60	20.00%
Doctoral/Professional Degree (e.g., Ph.D., M.Phil.)	20	6.67%

Table 4 reveals the frequency & percentage distribution of Education level

Income per Month (in Rs.)	Number of Women	Percentage
Below ₹30,000 per month	100	33.33%
₹30,000 - ₹1,00,000 per month	150	50.00%
Above ₹1,00,000 per month	50	16.67%

Table 5 reveals the frequency & percentage distribution of Income per month

Length of Employment	Number of Women	Percentage
Less than 1 year	60	20.00%
1-3 years	90	30.00%
4-6 years	80	26.67%
7-10 years	50	16.67%
More than 10 years	20	6.67%

Table 6 reveals the frequency & percentage distribution of Length of employment

Job Role	Number of Women	Percentage
Executive/Managerial	60	20.00%
Professional/Technical	80	26.67%
Administrative/Support	50	16.67%
Sales/Marketing	40	13.33%
Customer Service	30	10.00%
Other	40	13.33%

Table 7 reveals the frequency & percentage distribution of Job role

Geographic Location	Number of Women	Percentage
Urban	150	50.00%
Suburban	100	33.33%
Rural	50	16.67%

Table 8 reveals the frequency & percentage distribution of Geographic location

Previous Experience with gender-sensitive initiatives	Number of Women	Percentage
None	75	25.00%
Limited experience	100	33.33%
Moderate experience	90	30.00%
Extensive experience	35	11.67%

Table 9 reveals the frequency & percentage distribution of previous experience with Gender-sensitive initiatives

### Inferences on Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The study predominantly captured the perspectives of working-age women (25-44 years) in IT & ITES organizations, with a diverse marital status and relatively fewer caregiving responsibilities. Most respondents held a Bachelor's degree, earned a middle-income, and had 1-3 years of employment tenure. Professional/Technical and Executive/Managerial roles were common, primarily in urban areas. The majority had limited or moderate experience with gender-sensitive support initiatives, reflecting varied exposure levels.

## PART 2: THE FREQUENCY & PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY

### I Awareness and Utilization of Support Initiatives:

The data provided insights into the awareness, utilization, and satisfaction levels of gender-sensitive support initiatives among women employees in the organization.

- **Awareness:** 80% of respondents were aware of gender-sensitive support initiatives provided by their organization, while 20% were not.
- **Utilization:** Among those aware, 60% had utilized these initiatives, while 40% had not.
- **Frequency of Utilization:** Daily utilization stood at 20%, weekly at 30%, monthly at 15%, rarely at 20%, and never at 15%.
- **Types of Initiatives Utilized:** The most utilized initiatives in the past six months included mentorship programs (30%), employee assistance programs (25%), and flexible work arrangements (20%).

- **Satisfaction Levels:** Satisfaction ratings varied, with 33.33% completely satisfied, 26.67% very satisfied, 20% moderately satisfied, 13.33% slightly satisfied, and 6.67% not satisfied at all.

## II Well-being and Mental Health Needs:

The data collected provided insights into the well-being and mental health needs of women employees in the IT & ITES organization.

- **Overall Well-being:** Responses varied, with 20% rating it as excellent, 30% as good, 26.67% as average, 15% as poor, and 8.33% as very poor.
- **Well-being Challenges:** The most common challenges reported were high stress levels (50%), burnout (33.33%), work-life imbalance (40%), lack of social support (26.67%), and physical health issues (20%).
- **Mental Health Rating:** Ratings ranged from poor (6.67%) to excellent (20%).
- **Frequency of Stress:** Responses varied, with 10% always feeling stressed, 30% often, 40% sometimes, 15% rarely, and 5% never.
- **Support in Managing Mental Health:** 16.67% felt very supported, 33.33% supported, 20% neutral, 23.33% unsupported, and 6.67% very unsupported.
- **Job Roles:** Participants represented various roles, with 30% in technical/engineering, 20% in management/leadership, 23.33% in administrative/support, and 16.67% in customer service/client-facing roles.
- **Level of Job-related Stress:** Ratings ranged from very low (6.67%) to very high (16.67%).
- **Satisfaction with Work-life Balance:** Responses varied, with 23.33% very satisfied, 30% satisfied, 20% neutral, 20% dissatisfied, and 6.67% very dissatisfied.
- **Experience of Mental Health Challenges:** 60% reported experiencing mental health challenges, with the main ones being stress/anxiety (40%), burnout (30%), depression (20%), and work-related trauma (10%).
- **Effectiveness of Support Systems:** 13.33% found them very effective, 30% effective, 23.33% neutral, 23.33% ineffective, and 10% very ineffective.

## III Perceived Impact of Support Initiatives:

The collected data provided insights into the perceived impact of gender-sensitive support initiatives on the well-being and mental health of women employees in the IT & ITES organization.

- **Positive Impact on Well-being:** 60% of respondents felt that the support initiatives positively impacted their well-being, with 33.33% attributing improvements to reduced stress levels, 26.67% to increased job satisfaction, and 40% to improved work-life balance.
- **Attribution of Improvements:** Ratings for attributing improvements in well-being ranged from not at all (6.67%) to completely (20%).
- **Positive Changes in Mental Health:** 50% of respondents reported positive changes in their mental health, with 33.33% attributing improvements to reduced stress/anxiety and 26.67% to enhanced emotional well-being.
- **Satisfaction with Support Initiatives:** Satisfaction levels varied, with 16.67% very satisfied, 30% satisfied, 20% neutral, 20% dissatisfied, and 13.33% very dissatisfied.
- **Impact on Stress Levels:** Responses varied, with 33.33% experiencing reduced stress, 33.33% reporting no change, and 16.67% facing increased stress.
- **Job Satisfaction:** Ratings for job satisfaction ranged from very dissatisfied (6.67%) to very satisfied (20%).
- **Improvements in Work-life Balance:** 46.67% noticed improvements, with 16.67% experiencing significant improvement and 30% observing some improvement.
- **Effectiveness in Addressing Job-related Stress:** Ratings varied, with 20% finding the initiatives very effective, 33.33% effective, and 26.67% somewhat effective.
- **Impact on Overall Job Satisfaction:** 53.33% experienced improvements, with 23.33% significantly and 30% to some extent.

## IV Barriers and Challenges:

In the study, women employees in the IT & ITES sectors reported encountering various barriers and challenges in accessing gender-sensitive support initiatives provided by their organizations.

- **Barriers in Accessing Support Initiatives:** 50% of respondents encountered barriers, with the main challenges being lack of awareness (20%), limited availability of resources (13.33%), time constraints (23.33%), and cultural stigma (10%).
- **Effectiveness of Communication:** Responses varied, with 13.33% finding communication very effective, 26.67% effective, 33.33% neutral, 16.67% ineffective, and 10% very ineffective.
- **Challenges in Utilization:** 40% faced challenges, with difficulties in accessing support resources (16.67%), lack of flexibility in program offerings (13.33%), and perceived stigma associated with seeking support (10%) being notable.

- **Perception of Organizational Support:** Ratings ranged from not supportive at all (6.67%) to extremely supportive (23.33%) regarding organizational culture, and from very unsupportive (10%) to very supportive (26.67%) regarding leadership support.
- **Adequacy of Organizational Policies:** 60% of respondents felt that organizational policies did not adequately support the implementation of gender-sensitive initiatives.
- **Transparency in Communication:** Responses varied, with 16.67% perceiving communication as very transparent, 26.67% transparent, 23.33% neutral, 16.67% not transparent, and 16.67% very opaque.
- **Cultural Barriers:** 33.33% noticed cultural barriers, including gender bias or stereotypes (13.33%), resistance to change (10%), and hierarchical organizational structure (16.67%).
- **Perception of Organizational Inclusivity:** Ratings ranged from not inclusive at all (6.67%) to extremely inclusive (26.67%) regarding the organizational culture's inclusivity towards gender-sensitive initiatives.

### V Recommendations for Improvements:

The data from the survey indicates that:

- **Recommendations for Improving Accessibility:** 60% of respondents provided recommendations. The main areas for improvement included increasing awareness through regular communication channels (23.33%), enhancing accessibility with flexible scheduling options (20%), and expanding the range of support services available (16.67%).
- **Suggestions for Improving Communication Effectiveness:** 60% of respondents recommended ways to enhance communication about support initiatives. Key suggestions included increasing the frequency of communication (26.67%), providing clearer and more targeted messaging (23.33%), and utilizing diverse communication channels (30%).
- **Recommendations for Enhancing Inclusivity and Cultural Sensitivity:** 60% of respondents offered recommendations. These included ensuring representation and diversity in initiative planning and implementation (30%), incorporating cultural competency training for staff involved in support programs (26.67%), and tailoring initiatives to meet the specific needs of diverse employee groups (23.33%).
- **Likelihood of Participation with Recommended Improvements:** Responses varied, with 6.67% indicating not being likely to participate at all, 13.33% slightly likely, 26.67% moderately likely, 30% very likely, and 23.33% extremely likely to participate or utilize support initiatives if the recommended improvements were implemented.

### VI Intersectional Factors and Organizational Culture:

The survey data indicates the following:

- **Perception of Unique Challenges:** 80% of respondents believe women from different racial or ethnic backgrounds face unique challenges in the workplace. Discrimination or bias (50%), lack of representation in leadership positions (43.33%), and unequal access to career advancement opportunities (33.33%) were identified as the main challenges.
- **Disparities Based on Socioeconomic Status:** 66.67% of respondents observed disparities in well-being based on socioeconomic status within their organization. These disparities were evident in access to resources and support programs (40%), job security and stability (33.33%), and salary and compensation (26.67%).
- **Influence of Sexual Orientation:** 60% of respondents think sexual orientation affects women's well-being in the workplace. Discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation (46.67%) and lack of support for LGBTQ+ employees (40%) were identified as significant factors.
- **Perception of Organizational Culture and Leadership Support:** Respondents rated the inclusivity of organizational culture towards women from diverse backgrounds as moderately inclusive to very inclusive (ranging from 23.33% to 26.67%). Leadership support for gender diversity and inclusion initiatives was perceived as supportive to very supportive (ranging from 33.33% to 40%).
- **Effectiveness of Leadership Initiatives:** 60% of respondents observed initiatives led by organizational leadership aimed at promoting gender equality and inclusion. Their perceived effectiveness varied, with 23.33% to 30% rating them as very effective to effective.
- **Impact of Leadership Support:** Respondents largely agreed that leadership support positively impacts the effectiveness of gender-sensitive support initiatives (ranging from 33.33% to 30%).
- **Evaluation of Leadership Efforts:** Leadership efforts in addressing gender disparities and promoting inclusivity within the workplace were rated as effective to very effective by 36.67% to 26.67% of respondents.

### COMPARISON ANALYSIS

Younger respondents, particularly those below 24, tended to express higher levels of dissatisfaction with gender-sensitive support initiatives compared to older age groups. This demographic might have harbored

higher expectations for workplace support and been more vocal about areas needing improvement. Conversely, Executives/Managers often rated the effectiveness of these initiatives more positively, potentially due to their greater visibility into organizational initiatives or tailored support as leaders.

Employees with less than one year of experience reported facing more barriers in accessing support initiatives compared to their more tenured counterparts. New employees may have still been familiarizing themselves with available resources and experiencing challenges in navigating organizational support systems. Interestingly, differences in responses based on geographic location were minimal, suggesting a consistent impact of gender-sensitive initiatives across urban, suburban, and rural settings.

Respondents with extensive experience with gender-sensitive initiatives tended to provide more nuanced feedback and specific recommendations for improvement compared to those with limited or no prior experience. Additionally, married respondents and those with higher incomes tended to rate the effectiveness of gender-sensitive initiatives slightly higher, possibly indicating that these initiatives addressed specific support needs or responsibilities more effectively for these demographics.

### **IDENTIFYING PATTERNS**

Across demographic groups, consistent patterns emerged regarding satisfaction levels, barriers to access, inclusivity, leadership support, communication effectiveness, and the need for continuous improvement in gender-sensitive support initiatives. These patterns reflected the diverse perspectives and experiences of employees within the organization. Participants expressed varying degrees of satisfaction with existing initiatives, with some highlighting areas for improvement. Barriers to accessing support programs, such as lack of awareness and limited resources, were commonly cited across different demographic segments. Moreover, there was a shared call for inclusivity in workplace support, emphasizing the importance of tailored programs to meet the diverse needs of employees. Leadership support emerged as a crucial factor influencing the effectiveness of initiatives, with positive endorsement seen as vital for fostering a supportive organizational culture. Participants also emphasized the significance of clear and transparent communication strategies to enhance awareness and engagement. Overall, these identified patterns underscored the complex nature of employee perceptions and experiences related to gender-sensitive support initiatives, highlighting the need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation to meet evolving workforce needs.

### **PART 3 "SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS: INSIGHTS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS"**

During the theme identification process, a comprehensive examination of focus group discussions unveiled valuable insights into the efficacy of gender-sensitive support initiatives within IT & ITES organizations. Employees expressed notable positive impacts, citing reduced stress levels and heightened job satisfaction as direct outcomes of these initiatives. Moreover, critical barriers to access were highlighted, with participants underscoring issues like insufficient awareness and limited resource allocation. Recommendations for improvement were abundant, emphasizing the necessity of fostering inclusivity and ensuring transparent communication channels. Patterns emerged, emphasizing the pivotal role of leadership support and acknowledging the diverse intersectionality of employee experiences. These qualitative findings were further strengthened by quantitative data, corroborating the identified patterns and providing a nuanced understanding of employee perspectives. Ultimately, this holistic analysis guided the formulation of strategic organizational approaches aimed at cultivating a supportive workplace environment conducive to employee well-being.

### **FINDINGS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Research findings indicate that IT & ITES organizations have implemented diverse gender-sensitive support initiatives (Research Question 1) to address women's needs, including mentorship programs and flexible work arrangements. Women face varied well-being challenges influenced by job roles, organizational culture, and intersectional factors like race and socioeconomic status (Research Question 2). Despite barriers such as lack of awareness and cultural stigma (Research Question 4), these initiatives positively impact women's well-being (Research Question 3), highlighting the importance of inclusive leadership and tailored support programs (Research Question 6) to create supportive workplaces for all women. Tailoring support programs to be intersectional and inclusive (Research Question 5) was essential to address the diverse needs of women in these workplaces.

### **FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Research Objective 1 revealed varying levels of awareness and utilization of gender-sensitive support initiatives among women in IT & ITES organizations, with common use of mentorship programs and flexible work arrangements indicating potential areas for improvement. Diverse well-being challenges, including stress, burnout, and work-life imbalance, were identified among women in IT & ITES sectors according to

Research Objective 2, emphasizing the need for tailored approaches to address mental health needs across different job roles. Research Objective 3 reported positive impacts of support initiatives on women's well-being, with reductions in stress levels and increased job satisfaction indicating the effectiveness of these programs in enhancing emotional and physical well-being. Additionally, Research Objective 4 highlighted barriers such as lack of awareness and cultural stigma hindering women's access to support initiatives in IT & ITES organizations, underscoring the importance of addressing communication challenges and organizational perceptions to improve accessibility. Finally, Research Objective 5 provided recommendations focused on enhancing awareness, accessibility, and inclusivity of support initiatives, aiming to address diverse needs and foster a more supportive environment for women in IT & ITES organizations.

## **DISCUSSION**

The study revealed differing levels of awareness and utilization of gender-sensitive support initiatives, indicating a need for more effective communication strategies. Those who utilized these initiatives reported positive impacts on their well-being, highlighting the importance of such programs. However, barriers such as lack of awareness and accessibility were identified, emphasizing the need for improvement. The intersectional nature of women's experiences underscored the importance of inclusivity in support initiatives. Leadership support and organizational culture were identified as crucial factors influencing the effectiveness of these initiatives. Actionable recommendations were provided to enhance support initiatives, aiming to create more inclusive and supportive workplaces for women in IT & ITES organizations.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Limitations in this study include a sample primarily composed of women employees from IT & ITES organizations, potentially limiting generalizability. Self-reported data introduces potential biases, and the cross-sectional design hinders establishing causal relationships. Qualitative analysis relies on subjective experiences, while perspectives of organizational leadership were not extensively explored. Additionally, the study did not deeply investigate intersectionality's influence, suggesting areas for future research.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The study's implications suggest that IT & ITES organizations and policymakers should prioritize gender-sensitive support initiatives to meet the diverse needs of women employees. Targeted communication strategies can enhance awareness and utilization, while inclusive programs address intersecting challenges faced by diverse groups. Leadership support is crucial, requiring a culture of inclusivity and policy revisions to support initiatives effectively. Improving access to these initiatives positively impacts employee well-being, necessitating regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms. Policymakers can incentivize organizations and set standards to promote gender equity and well-being. Overall, these findings emphasize the importance of gender-sensitive support initiatives for women's empowerment in the workplace.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study yielded valuable insights into the effectiveness of gender-sensitive support initiatives within IT & ITES organizations. Positive impacts such as reduced stress and enhanced job satisfaction were observed, accompanied by identified barriers like lack of awareness and limited resources. Disparities based on factors like age, job role, and education level were uncovered, informing the need for tailored strategies. Moving forward, organizations can refine initiatives by enhancing communication, increasing awareness, and fostering leadership support, thereby promoting gender equality and workplace well-being.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Implement regular communication campaigns to raise awareness about existing support initiatives. Develop tailored support programs based on diverse needs. Ensure accessibility through online resources and flexible scheduling. Engage leaders in promoting a culture of gender equality. Address barriers hindering utilization through targeted efforts. Embed diversity and inclusion principles into organizational policies. Continuously monitor and evaluate initiative effectiveness. Collaborate with external partners to enhance support initiatives. These steps can create a more inclusive and supportive workplace for women in IT & ITES organizations.

## **CLOSING THOUGHTS**

In closing, this study illuminated the complexity of gender-sensitive support initiatives in IT & ITES firms and their impact on women's well-being. By blending quantitative and qualitative methods, we explored awareness, utilization, effectiveness, and challenges. Promoting gender equality and inclusivity demands a nuanced, all-encompassing strategy, acknowledging the varied needs of women employees. Engaging leaders, nurturing a supportive culture, and removing access barriers are vital steps for empowering women. Continued dialogue, collaboration, and innovation are imperative for refining and implementing gender-

sensitive initiatives. Leveraging insights and adapting to evolving needs can foster equitable, supportive workplaces, advancing gender equality in IT & ITES and beyond.

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