CHAPTER 5

The Socio-Economic Space of IT Work Culture and its Impact on the Familial Matrix.

The researcher gathered the information regarding the size of the IT work force in Technopark and Infopark by interviewing 40 HR managers representing all the three classes of companies-Large Indian IT companies, SME and MNC/FSE in Infopark and Technopark. The result of this investigation can be summarised as given below.

Table 5.1

Gender wise distribution of software employees in Infopark and Technopark

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Park</th>
<th>No of Employees</th>
<th>No of Men Employees</th>
<th>No of Women Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Up to 30 years</td>
<td>Above 30</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technopark</td>
<td>18000</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>28000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64.29%</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11000</td>
<td>9000</td>
<td>20000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>8000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infopark</td>
<td>5500</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>8000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>68.75%</td>
<td>31.25%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>5500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.54%</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23500</td>
<td>12500</td>
<td>36000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65.27%</td>
<td>34.73%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14000</td>
<td>11500</td>
<td>25500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.90%</td>
<td>45.10%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9000</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>10500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85.72%</td>
<td>14.28%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: researcher’s own estimation based on discussion with experts and key informants

The researcher’s previous experience in an HR Vendor company was a key help in this enquiry process. Tailored out of
the results of this investigation and the researcher’s firsthand experience in an HR Vendor company, this part, more than any theorization of literature, is largely a posterior analysis of empirical details. These results coincide with the information available on Technopark website; however, no authentic statistics is available. These findings have been corroborated by the report in THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS, THURSDAY, 11TH NOV, 2010. All the participants in the interview process are in agreement that 90 percent of their work force is of Kerala origin. The HR recruitment work, it is observed, in IT organizations in Kerala gives preference exclusively to Keralites. This information is reiterated by this formal enquiry. Another significant feature that emerges in the human resource space of the IT industry in Kerala is the large gulf between the attrition rate in Kerala which has steadily maintained a single digit rate, and the significantly higher attrition rate in the other IT states in India. This research work takes off from this point as it tries to explore the peculiarities of IT employment in Kerala.
5.1 Why Recruit only Keralites?

In course of this empirical endeavour about 40 professionals and 40 HR mangers were accosted with a semi structured interview process. According to the HR managers Kerala companies are willing to recruit from anywhere in India and do not hesitate to pay on par with the salary offered in the metros like Bangalore, Chennai etc or even higher but are very particular about getting Keralites. A HR manager representing a large Indian IT company with upward of 1200 workforce based at Technopark responded thus: “We used to conduct recruitment drives in Bangalore, Chennai, and Hyderabad with priority to Keralites. Any exceptional non Kerala candidate to our liking is given chance to work from our Chennai and Hyderabad centres where less than 100 people work. The table below shows the hiring preferences of HR Managers in Kerala.

Table 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domicile of Candidate</th>
<th>Kerala only</th>
<th>Tamilnadu and Kerala only</th>
<th>Any south Indian State only</th>
<th>Any Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiring preferences</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>18 %</td>
<td>8 %</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:-researcher’s own estimation based on discussion with HR Managers
HR managers representing 67% percent of the total HR people interviewed were positive about their preference exclusively for recruiting Keralites. Interestingly enough 18 % are willing to consider Tamilians also but they do not prefer professionals from any other South Indian states, say from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Any South Indian professional would do for yet another 18%. Of the HR managers, however, only 7% are ready to hire from any Indian state. HR managers representing the 67% seek long term employees and hence are on the lookout, specifically for Keralites. While they are unanimous about their preference, specifically for Keralites, they are not averse to Tamilians (Tamilian is a safe bet too), however, they are definitely against hiring people from Bangalore, Hyderabad and such South Indian States. “Kerala Culture is different,” they argue, “We are looking for professionals who have strong reasons to come to Cochin. Otherwise it will not work out.” Another HR manager from Trivandrum was also of a similar view: “Tamilians from Nagercoil, Kanyakumari side can as well be counted on to continue because Trivandrum is their nearest destination.”
One HR manager said “Cochin culture is not up to Bangalore. Weekends they need pubs to refresh themselves and malls to hang out,” in his opinion Cochin will soon become a metropolitan city attracting talents from other metropolises. “Recruiting from Bangalore is wastage of time and money. They cannot be held accountable, they will go as and when they get a chance. For them taking an assignment in Kerala is just a matter of getting a general hike in the salary as in any job change” He added.

Of the small group of 7% HR managers preferring to hire from anywhere in India 78% represent large CMM\(^1\) Level 5 companies because they need large employee size to compete in the market to grab projects. This statement agrees with the observation of Upadhya and Vasavi (2006) that large service companies are keener on large numbers of the employees and diversified set of skills rather than a chosen few with in-depth knowledge. The remaining 18 % represent MNCs which work on niche technologies and the remaining 4% represent Service companies who hire people for short term projects.

\(^1\) CMM is a process improvement approach developed by the Software Engineering Institute (SEI) of Carnegie Mellon University which provides organizations with the essential elements of effective processes that ultimately improve their performance. According to SEI there are Five different levels starting from Level 1 to Level 5 (Source: [http://www.sei.cmu.edu](http://www.sei.cmu.edu))
Looking at the IT scenario from the professionals’ point of view the companies are more or less an eddying dead end. They say that the companies in Kerala have evolved a tricky recruitment strategy. IT companies compete with each other, in general, in grabbing the best talents, while in Kerala they compete specifically with other companies in Kerala to cajole candidates from Bangalore/ Chennai / and other metros who are very particular about having a job in Kerala. They know that these candidates will stay with the same company for a long time. According to the professionals the companies in Kerala recruit only candidates who are very stable in their career history. And the Kerala standards count as stable a candidate who works at least 4 years with the same organisation. The IT companies in Kerala are on the beat in this; they are keen on recruiting only those who are likely to stay on.

5.2 Why Keralites are not interested in working in Kerala?

Dutta (2010) observed that India has more than 17.5 Million IT professionals wherein the contribution of Kerala is more or less 1.25 lakh out of which only 28% work in Kerala. It is also found that the HR managers have a tough time finding
the right kind of resource for the Kerala market (Keralites find Kerala IT space totally unappealing) while software professionals who like to work from Kerala find Kerala job market highly unappealing one that shackles upwardly mobile IT professionals to an eddy of no return. This reluctance on the part of the Kerala IT professionals to work from Kerala must be scrutinized in the context of the responses from the professionals.

The professionals interrogated on this front were eloquent on their point of dissent of where thirty nine percent voiced their dissatisfaction about the companies being opportunistic. One respondent even complained, “They are very smart. The companies, while recruiting, bait the clients with rosy promises and a fat salary. However they don’t give any hike in pay for the next two years, thus, while we stagnate our peers elsewhere get good hikes and their pay-scale climbs up significantly within this period.” The work atmosphere in Kerala is thoroughly disgruntling to 33% of them. One Project Manager regretted, “in my team I am in dire need of 12 people, but the company is trying to pull the project through with just the 8 employees it has provided. One has got a Job in Bangalore and has already put his paper. To aggravate matters further the HR is not
making any attempt to retain work force let alone fill the manpower gap. It was found, from the views of other respondents as well that the HR managers in Kerala are not at all keen to retain manpower; those who wish to leave are not given any incentive to stay back. The situation obtaining is one where, as HR managers surmise, the employees are overloaded by being tacitly required to make up for the hiatus in resources. Opportunities in Kerala are found to be limited and also limiting to 28% of the respondents; thus as one professional commented one who joins an IT company in Kerala is straight jacketed within the limited choice the state offers.

Table 5.3
Reason for Disinterest in Kerala

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Do not give good increment</th>
<th>Excessive workload</th>
<th>Lack of opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: researcher’s own estimation based on discussion with professionals

5.3 The general rate of salary increment per annum

The salary increment pattern was found to be way too lower than those in the other metros. The professionals groused that the average annual increment they got was about 10-12 %.
One respondent said: “For the last three years I have been getting a 10-15% increment which is pretty low compared to the 25-30% annual increment in my previous company in Bangalore.” The HR managers interviewed are also in agreement with this view. The input from the survey of HR people also affirms that the average hike in salary is around 10-15% in Kerala while in Bangalore it would be about 25-30%. “But that is not needed in Kerala because the cost of living is less and we hire only people who have other advantages in staying back in Kerala. It doesn't work out the other way. One HR person said “unless they are otherwise inclined to be in Kerala they would leave even if given 25-30%. Then why should we give more?” “When I joined, this company offered me a 20% hike on the salary that I received in Bangalore,” One professional confided, “I was working on ‘Windows Vista’ development team in Bangalore before Microsoft released it; that explained the hike. However for the past three years that I have been working here I have received a paltry 10% hike on an average. Now my salary is just 50% of what my team members draw in Bangalore.” Both the HR managers and software professionals are in agreement on the fact that Kerala IT
companies are taking advantage of the location constraint of the employees.

5.4 Excessive work load

The excessive work load is a factor being closely scrutinized here to verify the truth of the charge. The researcher interviewed one Development Manager in a product company in Cochin on 28th October 2009, at Cochin. He explained the cost plus model of operation.

Cost plus model

This person is from the product development division of a parent company in the US which does not sell any product in India; their Cochin centre is just a cost centre and there is no profit part. He added that this centre is working on ‘cost plus model’. Since the company is a cost centre, the parent company in the US pays the entire cost plus a 10% additional amount to give it an inflated projection in the profit reckoning of the Income Tax department in India. A major part of his job is to keep the costs at a perennial minimum. He agreed that the offshore centres do the effort estimation process in development which the onsite team reviews to give the final nod of approval for projects. When asked about the problem of overloading of
employees under such permutations and work combinations he responded that his career thrived on the successful overloading of employees. Thus he always sought to minimize the employee cost. Since compromising on the quality of the work force is sure to affect the quality of work, overloading of quality employees who can be pegged at a reasonable perk is the only alternative. He added that since his team members are very bright and hardworking they never miss the performance bonus.

A Business Unit Head in a service company in Technopark, Trivandrum interviewed on 16th November 2009 in Trivandrum talked about two types of contracting in service companies.

**Fixed cost method**

Here too it is the offshore vendor who does the effort estimation and quoting of the project. A major part of the job of the offshore vendor is to make it globally competitive in terms of money and effort. The difference between the approved price and actual cost is the profit of the vendor. Hence the offshore vendor always tries to execute it with minimum staff
requirement. Excellent project management expertise is needed to run the project with minimum staff requirement.

**Time and resource model**

This is also termed time and material model. Here resources are billed on an hourly basis. The offshore vendor makes the effort estimation. The cost estimation is based on the productivity standards like the number of lines per man days or function point per man days\(^2\). The offshore vendor interacts with the client through onsite engagement manager or account manager. The offshore vendor always tries to bid the lowest estimate rate to grab the project. The situation obtaining is one where the engineers on the project are mandated to complete the project within the time limit agreed upon and naturally they have to over work themselves to the point of exhaustion. He added that the same resource may be assigned to two different companies, since he/ she can be billed twice simultaneously. This interviewee who worked for 12 years in Bangalore in companies of the stature of Infosys, IBM etc said that this work culture is not possible in Bangalore and other IT hubs even if the employer deliberately wants it, because employee will look

\(^2\) In Cobol (a programming language) coding one function point needs three man hours for designing, coding and testing
for other opportunities since the professionals work in a ‘seller’s market’

It can be safely surmised that the employees’ assessment that the Kerala IT employees work under severe work pressure in Kerala and hence those who can help it tend to avoid Kerala as an IT destination, this is a valid argument that holds water.

5.5 Lack of opportunities

In the interview 28% responded that IT professionals are reluctant to take up employment in Kerala because it is a small market. The strange and conflicting claims by the professionals who feel the lack of employment opportunities while the HR managers find themselves hard up for employable professionals is further analyzed here. The table below sums up the responses of the employees when asked about their aversion to change their job within Kerala. This is an important point interrogated in course of the research and the reasons are summed up hereunder.
Table 5.4

Reason for not changing job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Trivandrum</th>
<th>Cochin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GTECH does not allow</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companies are more or less same</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since it is a small market, confidential processing is difficult</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar technology companies are not available</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with this organisation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: researcher's own estimation based on discussion with professionals

GTECH, an association of Technopark companies requires its member organizations to sign an MOU to the effect that they would not recruit employees from among the members. This prevents the employees in one IT firm in Technopark from taking up employment in other companies in Technopark. Sunil Gupta President of G.TECH in 2007 (The Indo-Asian News Service (IANS) Reports in 2007) claimed that member organizations of GTECH do not hire employees across organisations. He presented this as a merit of the association. Critical analysis highlights how corporate interests are
safeguarded at the cost of individual space since it curbs the intra state ergonomic preferences of people who are otherwise strongly inclined to be in Trivandrum. One respondent commented, “We are actually in ‘bonded labour’. They are exploiting our family constraints to be in Trivandrum. However in the absence of choice we comply with them.”

Another major reason given for not changing the organisation is the lack of confidentiality of processing of resume due to the limited space of the market. The fear of consequences when their parent company comes to know of their decision to leave is a major reason for staying put, in spite of their desire to fast track their career. One respondent argued “I worked in Bangalore; when I started looking for a change the HR person called me to figure out my reasons for opting to change. When I put in my paper, they offered me a counter offer and onsite option. Here, if I put in my paper, the next day onwards they will treat me like a bull in harness.” His statements agree with one HR Manger’s statement, “we do not try to hold anybody if they put in paper, because even if we offer 20% hike they will go when they want.”
Another reason stated is the lack of similar technology companies. One Product Manager explains “I am working in a telecom product development company. No such company in Kerala is working on similar product. And so in the absence of better options I am constrained to stay on. Fortunately they give me the Bangalore standard salary, even though I have to execute two product managers’ job singly.” It was only 15.5 % who were of the opinion that they stayed back because they were happy with the organisation.

5.6 Significance of attrition in the Kerala context:

Human resource is the major capital of Information Technology industry and the success of any IT organization is directly dependent on the quality of the human resource. The most difficult management issue in the IT industry is recruitment and retention of work force (Upadhya and Vasavi 2006). Rahul Budhwar of FMS, University of Delhi in the article “Indian Software Industry: the Way Forward” observes that employee cost and attrition is rising in IT industry and that the high expense of employee training makes the situation worse.

when the employees switch jobs before the employer gets the benefits of trained resources. The competition from other countries like China, Philippines etc compel the Indian contractor to work at a low price.

Attrition in IT industry in major destinations in India like Bangalore, Chennai, Pune were reported to be high during the pre-recession phase, i.e., before 2008. The high rate of recruitment is commensurate to the rate of attrition in 2010 in the IT sector. The attrition rate graphs in the major IT hubs in India show an upward swing. However the available literature shows that the attrition in Kerala maintained a single digit level while in other metros it zoomed to the order of 20% or above during the pre-recession period. NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Service Companies) in 2007 has observed that attrition is a major problem in the Indian IT Industry and has urged the government to effect changes in the education sector to produce high calibre professionals to meet the demand for skilled employees.

Subramanian (2005) records the levels of attrition in Hewitt Associates as 14.5 % in the year 2004. The resource

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4 Source: www.nasscom.org
shortage felt in the IT industry is further attested to by the observation of Kumar and Puranam (2008) that Indian IT giants set up their development centres in Mexico, China, Poland etc not only with the objective of providing closer-to-the-customers services but also to get more talents from these countries to compete with the current attrition rate in India.

**What is the status in the post recession phase**

Kannan (2011) reported that while many IT companies are recovering from 2008-2009 slow down many bigger companies have already achieved a steady growth pace. Das (2010) reports that Som Mittal chairman of NASSCOM is of the opinion that Indian IT industry is going to face more attrition in the coming years because industry is becoming stronger after the recession period. The attrition is rising and it is about 16% in 2010. While TCS maintained the attrition rate at 11.8%, in Infosys, it climbed from 11.1% during 2008-2009 to 13.4% during 2009-2010. Since the attrition is expected to be high in the coming years, HCL Technologies, a premier player in global IT market came up with the slogan “Employee first; customer second.” HCL realized that the key to customer satisfaction was with the employee. ‘Employee first’ prioritizes the employee potential

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5 Source: [www.nasscom.org](http://www.nasscom.org)
maximization over his/her professional performance\textsuperscript{6}. ‘Employee first’ is selected as a case study in Harvard Business School. Business Week has commented about it as a radical management philosophy which world will learn from. Bhattacharya (2010) reported that the Pune based Zensar Technologies has recorded the attrition rate at 18% across the company and the company has implemented various schemes to reduce the attrition. Mishra (2010) reported that 15% attrition is quite normal when the companies have set themselves a target of keeping the attrition figures below 20%. Since an increasing number of projects are outsourced to India companies like IBM, Accenture and so on are trying to retain and hire more talents

The HR managers of IT organisations interviewed for the research revealed the attrition figures as shown in the table. 5.5. This is the average of the rate given by 20 HR Managers from Kochi and 20 HR managers from Trivandrum.

\textsuperscript{6} Source: [http://www.hcl.in/employeesfirst.asp](http://www.hcl.in/employeesfirst.asp)
Table 5.5

Attrition Figures in IT, Kerala

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation(^7)</th>
<th>Cochin</th>
<th>Trivandrum</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL/PL</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect/PM/DM</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO/CIO/Director</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: researcher’s own estimation based on discussion with experts and key informants

The study results show that the attrition rates even into the post recession present are below 10% in Kerala whereas in other metros it has soared to above 25%. The HR managers are observed to opine that there is a resource crunch in Kerala while Software professionals feel that opportunities are limited. It is observed that the average attrition is 24% in Software Engineer level which is similar or more than what is reported in Bangalore and Chennai. “People who do not get absorbed through the campus selection process of big corporate ventures join companies in Kerala. They stay for a period of 2 years to

\(^7\) CTO-Chief Technology Officer, CIO-Chief Information Officer, PM-Project Manager, DM-Delivery Manager, PL-Project Leader, TL-Team Leader, SSE-Senior Software Engineer, SE-Software Engineer
gain the requisite experience before they can migrate to their dream companies in Bangalore,” one HR manager said.

The interesting thing is that while the attrition is observed to be at its highest in SSE/ TL/PL level by Upadhya and Vasavi (2006) this study observed this figure to be very low. The HR managers as well as software professionals agree that Kerala companies recruit professionals who have strong reason like parental/familial obligations to be in Kerala. Most of the professionals at SSE/TL/PL level are married and with children and hence, are not ready to move out of Kerala even though abundant opportunities are available in other metros. It can be safely inferred from these observations and the revelations of professionals and HR managers interviewed that it is mainly people with strong familial commitments who stay back in the IT organizations in Kerala. This contributes to the low attrition rates at that level.

5.7 Economic Status

The software professionals who participated in this interview process are economically well off. Out of 40 participants, 18 professionals own more than one house. They invest money mainly in buying apartments. The reason
observed is that most of them have relocated from Bangalore, Chennai, Pune etc, where they own a house. When they come to Cochin or Trivandrum, they buy another one. These professionals like to stay very close to their office. One HR said “these guys get a lot of money, but they don’t save it. They have costly spending habits.” This is found to be true since it has been observed that most of the respondents use branded clothes, shoes and accessories. Researcher observed in her visit to Technopark and Infopark that almost all employees commute in cars except the people working in KPO (Knowledge Process Outsourcing) and BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) companies. The IT professionals and HR Managers generally talk about their salary in terms of Annual CTC (Cost To the Company).

One Interviewee said that HR is not happy with the pay structure of IT professionals because HR persons with 10 years experience get less than that of IT person with 4 years experience. One professional said “I am 5 year experienced and my package is 4.8 Lakh per annum. My HR is 8 years experienced, I am sure he is not paid anything of this kind.” One said “the disparity in salary annoys them; however, they do not generally show it.” This grudge can be read from the words
of HR people. One HR said “working late hours, it is not a big thing. These people are getting a fat salary. If we pay them a fat salary, we expect commensurate returns in terms of efforts.”

5.8 Social Involvement

Social involvement of IT professionals is found to be less. When asked about the frequency of their participation in family functions such as marriages, betrothals, and funeral etc. they responded that they would be more than happy to engage with such functions if it is on a Sunday. “Participating in funerals is not possible most of the times. It is an unexpected event. We can not find time for that” one said. “I am working on UK project. So I follow the UK calendar where October 2nd is not a holiday” He added that sometimes he felt ashamed of that industry practice, but it is the industry practice. One respondent complained that work pressure hindered him from community interactions. “We come at usual time but leave at late hours. How do we go engage in community activities” She added that she was an active participant in NSS programs when she was an engineering student in college, but now she keeps herself away from the society. Social networking sites
such as ‘Facebook’, ‘orkut’ link them to similar professionals and the computer savvy.

5.9 Health

The health issue is a major part to be analyzed and confirmed through quantitative stock taking in a cultural paradigm. Key informants such as two ayurvedic doctors (one from Cochin and one from Trivandrum), two eye specialists and two physicians gave a few eye opening accounts in this regard. The ayurvedic doctors stated very clearly that they have a good number of patients from IT segment. The major problem they have identified is the neck and back pain. According to the doctors people from IT come to treat hypertension and diabetes, two lifestyle diseases. Doctors find sedentary jobs and concentrated viewing of the luminous screen from a particular angle a major cause of neck pain and back pain. The researcher happened to meet a few IT professionals while waiting for the interview with the doctors. But in the narrative enquiry process with the select 40 professionals, most of them commented that they do not have any health issue. So the quantitative analysis method where the identity of employee remains anonymous is employed to confirm this observation. The eye specialists also
testify to the fact that a good number of IT professionals do suffer from eyesight problems. In a personal interview, 12 people were found to be using spectacles. Of the people interviewed 8 people said that they started using spectacles after 6 to 7 years of work in IT.

Many visits to Technopark and Infopark also helped confirm the visibly manifest problem of obesity among the IT workers. The employees are found to spend money on junk food items in the cafeteria and other food outlets. In personal communication many respondents revealed that junk food is a common feature of IT employment. The workers who relocated from metros say that in Kerala they miss the sort of malls and food courts they are used to in the metros. This is a hindrance to attracting people used to the life and culture of Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad and such cyber spaces. One respondent who returned from US also complained that the parks need more facilities of this kind to attract talents. A respondent representing a CMM level 5 Company informed that in their Bangalore campus everything was aligned, food courts, KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken), work out facilities. Here one finds no such facilities which even if made available within reach, cannot be availed of due to lack of time. The managers of the
two Gyms (one in Kochi and one in Trivandrum) interviewed for the purpose of the research also corroborated the fact that IT people are short of time for regular workout sessions. Managers at both the places informed the researcher that they have many IT workers as members, but their regular presence is found to be lacking. IT people come in groups to take membership, but they do not go for it. One HR Manager in Cochin said that they had a group going out for daily walks after tea break at 4.00pm. But this habit is not seen to sustain in the long run. The main problem, as far as an IT person is concerned is that he is answerable to his client for the amount of work demanded of him. So even when he is not constrained to report to his authorities, his time has already been pre allocated for the avalanche of work he has to complete in time. The IT respondents say that they like to do regular exercises, but the work load and family commitments prevent them from doing so.

5.10 Family enquiries

The very unique recruitment strategy employed by the Kerala IT companies gave the researcher familiarity with many IT workers’ families during her career as a recruitment consultant. Because of the special recruitment strategy of IT
companies in Kerala, a recruiter has to interact with the family members, especially spouses during the recruitment process. Researcher herself experienced that the success rate of recruitment of a candidate from other metros like Chennai, Bangalore etc strictly depends on the constraint of the candidate to be in Kerala. The researcher’s acquaintance with many families made the study possible. Diligent enquiry of the background of the employees working in Kerala brings out the fact that those employed in the IT sector in Kerala have a strong reason to be in Kerala.

In course of the research three kinds of families were identified

1) Families with both the partners working in the IT sector

The number of IT couples is found to be large in the entry cadre. The software engineer-couples are commonly found in the same park but not in the same organizations. Companies have an unwritten policy of not employing couples. The intention of this policy is to prevent the absence of both the employees when they ask for leave for family related reasons. This is also a testimony to the
indispensability of every individual in IT projects since they try to manage with minimum number of employees.

2) Either of the partners working in IT and the other working in a non-IT sector.

This category has the largest number of male partners working in IT; however, wives working in the IT sector with husbands in non-IT sector are also found. Females reaching the higher echelons of the IT organizations are rare.

3) Male partner with the IT and female partner a homemaker.

In a good number of cases it was found that the female partner, who stays back at home is also IT educated; however, she is forced to give up her career due to familial constrains. Many home managers leave their job during child rearing stages.

5.10.1 Family Environment

It is observed that IT couples with children usually stay with their parents. It has been told that the parents are a necessity to look after the children. This is very often a blessing
in disguise since the need is mutual, for parents (most of the respondents belong to nuclear families with two children) with both their children working in IT, they get to have the presence of their grandchildren with them. In most cases both the siblings are found to be IT professionals. There are parents who feel that IT is a highly lucrative profession and they have done well by their children having educated their children in the IT and related disciplines. In many cases parents live with them and go home during weekends.

The major complaint raised by couples is the lack of quality time to spend with the family. One respondent argued that she left her job in Accenture, Bangalore to join her husband in Cochin and is now working with a small product company. She finds herself dissatisfied both in her family life and her career, “My time start at 10.30 am and ends by 7.30. Usually I leave by 8.30. After reaching home, I have very little time left for the family.” Professionals with children point out the lack of Crèches and Day Care centres. All the while they work, their minds are preoccupied with concerns about their children at home. After a tiring day when they reach home they have to put up with the servants’ complaints. One respondent, where both partners are working in IT, complained that her
husband does not spend available time with the children. Her husband on his part explained that he was working in a mission critical product, for which he is being paid for, and negotiating between his hard work and children’s tantrums was not easy. This person seemed to be one with an attitude that making money for family was the primary and only responsibility of the father and the rest was the concern of the mother. One husband, whose wife is working in IT, expressed that they are an economically content family; however, he had his apprehension about the way his children were being brought up. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the lack of involvement of his wife in child rearing. According to him she was not spending enough time with the children. Wife argued that she was at a juncture where she couldn’t leave her career and come back to it at a later stage. She believed that the children would understand when they grow up that their mother had worked hard just for them. These observations agree with the statement of the family court judge that, among people working in IT sector it is found that they give prime importance to money more than anything else. Their willingness to support other family members emotionally and physically is found to be low. The family court counsellor also
shared the same opinion. It is generally agreed upon that IT professionals are parochial in the matter of sharing, especially time, even with their own children.

Majority of children in these families are found to be undergoing primary education because most of the parents belong to the age group of 25-35. A few are found to be doing high school and secondary school education. The IT work makes the professionals independent-minded. The children are also found to enjoy a high level of independence in most of the IT families where grandparents are in charge of the care of children. TV is observed to be the most common source of entertainment. Most of the families opt to live in apartments near their workplace and so the children are denied an opportunity to grow up with their peer group. The researcher, during a visit to the home of an IT couple, came across children in the family quarrelling amongst themselves for switching TV channels to each one’s favourite show. The mother, an IT professional, said she wouldn’t interfere generally since she had her hands full with her own daily dose of worries especially after downturn in IT industry.
In a bid to examine the problems of children of IT couples in course of their growing up without the support of quality time from the parents, child psychologists from Kochi and Trivandrum were interviewed. They showed their lack of awareness of any significant problem among these children. On the contrary a paediatrician, a graduate from AIIMS, Delhi opined that children with behavioural issues are significantly higher in number in IT professionals’ families. He also explained the lack of awareness among the parents of their children’s problems which, according to him, is why it never gets into medical records. He pointed to the fact that the parents who come after long and tiring day at work dismiss them off with formal and polished encounters. According to him they can practice the method of giving warm touch; he suggested ‘a one minute pat method’. According to him the physical touch while hugging children has tremendous effect which can be practised even in busy career life. But the lack of awareness is the problem. He was of the opinion that family environment of the IT professionals leaves much to be desired for.
5.10.2 Marital Quality

A sexologist in Cochin underlined the fact that a noticeably large number of IT employees do seek expert help in their conjugal life. The following facts were gleaned from the interview with the sexologist. The marital quality of the IT employees is an indicator of how a lucrative profession can have adverse effect on personal intimacies. IT people are professionally trained to work with the speedy and accurate medium of the computers and are found to be singularly inept in handling the patient and steady pace of life-long demands like marital relationship. They weigh everything in terms of cost benefit model and are too myopic to see the fruits of life-long investments; this naturally ends them up in adjustment problems and in the long run festers into sexual problems and other linked issues. He said that the clients from IT are too impatient to go into the intricacies of a problem and to root it out. Their reluctance is the biggest hindrance to a permanent cure to their problem. They are always on the lookout for fresher pastures and they fail miserably. A qualitative measure of marital robustness is well neigh impossible because of the respondents’ reluctance to disclose intimate details. But the researcher’s rapport with IT people helped identify a few cases
through references which clearly demonstrate marital problems among IT work people. In all the cases overload of work, where overtime work is the symbol of dedication becomes symptomatic of workaholism which leads to misunderstanding in personal life. One psychologist from Trivandrum observed that financial independence coupled with excessive work pressure makes things worse. Unconsummated marriages are the main outcome of such family matrices. According to her the financially independent couples always find grass greener on the other end of the valley and think of dissolution. Parents, who are either dependent or proud of their wealth, contribute negatively in their marriage break ups. She goes on to say that marriage breakage is found to be high in women working in IT. This statement agrees with family court judges’ observation that IT women are stubborn in nature and reluctant to hear even the paternal advice from the senior judge.

5.11 HR Managers’ and other stakeholders’ awareness

HR Managers and Managing Directors of Indian subsidiaries of US/UK Companies were quizzed about these problems. The HR managers are aware of the problem that, in Kerala the IT workers are constrained to do extra work
compared to other cities. Managing Directors (who are also employees) agree with it. But the common argument raised is that, they operate from Kerala just because the cost of operation is less here. Hence the tedium of hard work has to be taken as a part of this cost reduction process. Furthermore the employees get a chance to work from their home town. The salary may not be up to the Indian market standard, but the cost of living is also less in Kerala. They also argued that no one is compelled to work. Hence if they work in this environment, they do it for some additional benefit than working outside Kerala. So it is not to be considered as exploitation. One MD expressed his opinion that in Bangalore an employee has to spend at least 2 hours each in the morning and evening on road because of the rush hour traffic. Here in Cochin one living near Infopark can reach in 10 minutes time. His argument is that if the employees share half of the 4 hours time saved for the benefit of the organization he can work at least two hours extra.

HR managers also share this opinion. They say that IT workers are liable to work extra if it needs be. One manager argued that if one works late hours and even Saturdays, it is not a corporate failure, it is to be seen as a personal failure.
“We don’t even check the entry time, exit time, if the customer is happy we are happy,” He argued. “If one put extra hours it is his inability. If he does not want to do it, he can opt for a slower paced job like government service,” another HR said. The IT employees were also seen to share the same opinion. They never think some interventional approach can better the work culture and thereby the family environment.

Surprisingly no government or quasi government agencies have any authentic information regarding the size of IT worker population in Kerala. The IT segment is, presumably, the most lucratively significant area of employment in Kerala and the government spends a lot of money in the development of its infrastructure. However the lack of a holistic governmental mechanism in providing for a healthy, energetic working atmosphere for the professionals in the industry is evident from their lack of this primary data about the workers. A consistent and comprehensive study rather than any piecemeal, knee-jerk action on the part of the government is required for the betterment of this situation.