Chapter – II

Review of Literature
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Women are the backbone of any economy primarily shaping the future of the country. She who earlier used to stay at home to attend the domestic chores is shedding the tradition bound role to take part in economic pursuits. She has no hesitation to work on an equal footing with men. Globalization has begun to cover almost every aspect of economic activity and it has in its wave thrown up opportunities of all types. Advances in information technology has facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behaviour, especially of children and young adults. Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women.

A brief account of the available literature pertinent to the present study is presented in this chapter. The review has been made from a variety of sources namely books, journals, newspapers, magazines websites, unpublished research theses, researches conducted by consultants, etc. The review of literature examines the following areas,

(i) Studies on Women Employees in general
(ii) Studies on Women Employees in I.T. Sector
(iii) Studies on Work Life Balance
(iv) Studies on Problems of Women Employees
(i) **Studies on Women Employees in General**

Peter Murray, et al. (2008) track the representation of executive women at work. First, the paper discusses the significant deficit of female managers and a marked decline of women professionals. Significant differences in age and sex distributions are evident between different occupational groups, and discriminatory practices continue to play a role. The study discusses the implications of these patterns. Second, the paper describes how labour-management policies might address the more salient gender issues. The study suggests that since some common “old” perceptions on women as more suited to particular professions are slowly being reversed, new policies for equal representation are required.

Wu, Hwei Ming (2007) examined the relationship of self-efficacy, work family conflict, social support, gender role attitude, role model and career aspiration to top management among women in middle management at the manufacturing line. This study intended to determine the contribution of each factor to career aspiration. Data were collected from 109 married women in middle management at eight private manufacturing companies located in Bangi and Nilai. This study found that self-efficacy, social support, gender role attitude and role model were significantly related to career aspiration ($p<0.05$). Specifically, self-efficacy and gender role attitude were the most significant antecedents of career aspiration among women in middle management in manufacturing line.
According to Dipa Mukherjee (2001) women’s position in the labour market is quite vulnerable and they face widespread discrimination, especially in the informal sector. Investigating the changing position of women in the informal manufacturing sector in India over the 1989-2000 period and she found that the share of women in total employment is declining in the sectors traditionally reserved for women and increasing in the non-traditional sectors. Distribution of women employment is becoming more evenly spread across both activity groups and regions. Poverty, literacy and per capita income are identified as important determinants of incidence of women employment. She made some suggestions on minimum wage, mass literacy campaign along with vocational and job training.

Lundy, M and Younger (1994) state that women are joining the workforce in increasing numbers without relinquishing their family responsibilities. Women continue to be the majority of clients whom most human resources personnel serve, and more and more of those women clients are in the work place.

(ii) Studies of Women Employees in I.T. Sector

Reimara Valk and Vasanthi Srinivasan (2011) state that one of the significant changes witnessed in the labour markets in India has been the entry of women as I.T. professionals in the rapidly growing software services sector. As the women take on the role of income earners in addition to their traditional role of the homemaker, they are under great pressure to balance their work and personal lives. This study attempts to examine how work and family related
factors influence the work–family balance with the ease of Indian women in I.T. sector. The study is based on an exploratory qualitative study of women I.T. professionals in the software sector in Bangalore, India. The narratives reveal six major themes: familial influences on life choices; multi-role responsibilities and attempt to negotiate them; self and professional identity; work–life challenges and coping strategies; organisational policies and practices; and social support.

Smita R. Chavan analyses (2011) the positive and negative impact of the outsourcing industry on the society and the individuals in India. Various health issues that came to light are stress, sleeplessness, headache, fatigue, sense of exhaustion, lack of concentration, etc. It was also found that a number of factors like hindrance in personal life, physically tiring nature of work, better salary, lack of growth opportunity in conducive policies and procedures could be some of the reasons for employees to leave the industry/company. Majority of employees complained of headache and digestive disorders. Almost everyone stressed on having provision for power naps of 10-15 minutes. Employees accepted that they enjoy various facilities and benefits provided by the company like Provident Fund, Gratuity, Personal Accidental Insurance; company leased accommodation, recreational (like Cafeteria) and other facilities, corporate credit card, educational benefits, performance based incentives, regular get together and other cultural programs, employee referral schemes and maternity leave, etc. Employees also accepted that their spending has increased and much of the money is spent on lifestyle products, recreational activities and to support the family. Employees dismissed the
aspect of increased professionalism being unique to the BPO industry and said that professionalism is pervasive in all sectors.

Dutta, Mousumi and Zakir Husain (2010) view that the rapid growth of the Information Technology (IT) industry in India would generate less exploitative avenues of employment for women. Further, economic empowerment would strengthen the bargaining power of women within the household and improve her self-esteem. However, recent studies argue that the IT sector has been unable to isolate itself from the social context so that the organizational process continues to be shaped by the conflicting and asymmetrical gender relationships that prevail in Indian society. This leads to the imposition of a dual burden (of work and home commitments) on working women. Based on a survey of women workers in Calcutta’s IT sector, this paper argues that contextual developments have weakened the patriarchal foundations of the family. This has allowed women workers to break out of a passive mould and attempt to carve out their individual destinies. However, organizational constraints and the family structure impose structural constraints on their agency, so that women workers have to adapt their aspirations to contextual realities. Decision-making of working women may, in this emerging situation, be conceptualized in terms of Simon’s satisficing model.

Mallika Dasgupta, (2010) is of the view that Emotional Intelligence is considered to be a very powerful tool to an employee to manage relationships and achieve success at work. The study explored its relationship to some of the important psychosocial variables like Quality of Work Life (QWL), Work Family Role Conflict and Perceived Happiness of female IT professionals. The
findings were encouraging as Emotional Intelligence had been found to bear significant relationships with all other variables. It was positively correlated with Quality of Work Life and Happiness, indicating that it contributes toward achieving higher Quality of Work Life and greater Perceived happiness and was negatively correlated with both the domains of Work family Role Conflict, indicating that Emotional Intelligence tones down the perception of role conflict and thereby reduces the stress produced by it. The implication of the study is far reaching, as it suggests an important tool to HR professionals to deal with some of the very important variables like stress, discontentment, Quality of Work Life and Work family Life Balance.

Gunaseelan Rethinam and Maimunah Ismail (2008) on reviewing the meaning of Quality of Work Life (QWL), analyse constructs of QWL based on models and past research from the perspective of IT professionals in many countries and in Malaysia. The constructs of QWL discussed are health and well-being, job security, job satisfaction, competency development, work and non-work life balance. The article concludes that QWL from the perspective of IT professionals is challenging both to the individuals and organizations.

Gunavathy and Suganya (2007) in their study among married women employees of BPO companies traced the causes, consequences of work life imbalance and interventions for work life balance. More than two-third of the respondents state the experienced work-life imbalance primarily on account of work interference with personal life. The causes for work life imbalance were classified as organizational and personal factors. The organizational factors included work-related factors, time-related factors and relationship-related
factors. The personal factors included lack of family support, marital conflicts and frequent change in sleeping patterns. According to the study, the three main consequences of work-life imbalance were stress and burnout, ill-health and poor work performance. The respondents also experienced guilt of not being able to spend time with family, anxiety about poor performance, displacement of negative emotions on family members and on co-workers.

Messermith (2007) studied the antecedents of work-life conflict in the IT profession and suggested solutions that organizations could implement to increase work-life balance of IT professionals. Four antecedents of work-life conflict were classified into two factors namely, work-domain factors and individual factors. The study found that frequency changing requirements, the need to meet aggressive and often unrealistic timeliness, the need to troubleshoot at any hour of the day and the need to complete important routine maintenance operations during non-core business hours are the issues producing the work life conflict. Further, the need to update one’s skills led to additional working hours, shift work and on-call support. The study urged organizations to recognize the factors leading to work-life conflict among IT workers and to take steps to minimize the organizational consequences associated with work-life conflict. The solutions suggested include family-friendly policies, socialization tactics, merging work and non-work time and high involvement work practices.

Singh and Pandey (2005) in their study on the employment aspects of women in call centers found that 90 per cent of the respondents had difficulties balancing work and personal life. The nature of job restricted their social life,
curtailed their participation in the family, and causing health implications and stress. Work-life balance was eased through support for domestic work and adjustments between the married couples.

Sandra Ohly et al. (2006) examined the relationship between reutilization and four work characteristics (job complexity, time pressure and supervisor support) on the one hand and a range of creative and proactive behaviours (creativity, innovation, personal initiative and submitting suggestions to the organizational suggestion system) on the other hand in a randomly selected sample of 278 employees of a German hi-tech company. Among others, results revealed that supervisor support was positively associated with higher personal initiative. However, job complexity and supervisor support were not related to creativity.

According to ASSOCHAM survey (2005), women have now taken great strides to walk alongside men even in the corporate world. They have become more conscious about their individuality and independence. Tremendous opportunities exist for women in nightshifts, as it offers both a better pay package and security. But the state of safety and security is not the same amongst all the sectors. Comparing the other sectors it was found that BPO conform the maximum satisfaction to women in both pecuniary and security aspects. BPO sector has been observed as the more promising sector for women in the nightshift. Women employees in this sector are facing minimal problems as compared with textiles and leather sectors undertaken for study in their survey.
Anilkumar and Krishnan (2005) investigated the factors causing imbalance in the work life among the top level management. He reported that 63 per cent of the top level respondents at the helm of affairs admitted to have been affected by work life imbalance. Out of 63 respondents, 95 per cent of them representing female gender attributed the imbalance to their domestic obligations towards children and elder.

Scholarios and Marks (2004) explored the factors facilitating work life balance. The study focused on the software engineers in selected I.T. firms and found that sacrifice of non-work commitments in favour of work commitment enabled them to progress faster in the career ladder but their families suffered to the extent they progressed in the career path. The study also reported that some of the respondents could achieve success on domestic as well as on professional front thanks to leveraging some factors to benefit both the fronts. The analysis identified certain factors like time flexibility, organizational support for non-work commitments and low work-life spill over, organizational commitment and extrinsic satisfaction which enabled them to strike work life harmony.

Dora Scholarios and Abigail Marks (2004) examined the impact of employer flexibility to work life issues and negative spillover from work to non-work life on the attitudes of software developers. The study found out that intrusion of work into private life for this group of workers still has a substantial impact on work-related attitudes. Work-life boundary variables affect trust in the organization which plays a meditational role in relation to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The study suggested that even
within this industry, where employees are relatively individualistic in orientation, highly marketable and unlikely to show attachment to a single organization, mutual gains for employee and employer can be attained by an accommodative approach to non-work commitments which may lead to greater organizational attachment.

Vittal (2003) is of the opinion that IT sector plays a very vital role in empowerment of women folk. He states that empowering women in the real sense implies that their position should be strengthened in the family and in the society; adequate support system is to be built up both in the private and in the public spheres. This requires a lot of cultural and attitudinal change in the mind-set of the people to accept women’s progression. In this context, the author has also emphasized the role of ‘metro-sexual men’, men who are sharing the responsibility of the family which might help women to be an active agent in the IT workforce. He has also indicated that only such of those who are strong enough to challenge social barriers could continue their professional journey.

Hyman et al. (2003) examined the impact of work on the personal life of women employees working in call centres and software developing firms. He has found that organizational pressure was the main culprit in triggering work life balance. He strongly believed that work centrality was the second important factor that brought about work life disharmony. Therefore he has suggested that the issues of work life imbalance could be effectively and easily addressed thanks to organisational support and work autonomy.
(iii) Studies Relevant to Work Life Balance across the Sector

Baral and Bhargava (2011) have stressed that the organizations should introduce work life balancing programmes only after balancing the needs of the employees and organisational values. Otherwise the programmes would not bring about the intended results.

Khurram Shahzad, et al. (2011) explored the relationship of work life policies and job stress to the attrition of Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) in Pakistan. Data were collected from 118 CSRs working in call centers to test the relationship among variables. Results of the study showed negative relationship of employee attrition with work life policies and positive relationship with job stress. The study advocated revamping of organisational policies to address the challenge of attrition and job stress.

Amah, O. E. (2010) has argued that the institution of work family friendly policies has the potential to reduce the conflict resulting from the absence of spouse in the family. He has stated that work family friendly policies need to be instituted in the firms and a congenial and conducive organisational culture has to be created to fix the issue of family work conflicts.

Amita Singh (2010) investigated 133 respondents working in software industry. He mainly focused on the awareness of work life balance programmes being implemented therein. The study brought to the fore the poor awareness prevailing among the subjects surveyed and he suggested that the high degree of awareness about such programmes need to be created on a massive scale for an effective implementation thereby enabling the employees to achieve work life balance.
Noraani Mustapha (2010) conducted a test on the mediating effects of work-family facilitation and family satisfaction on the relationship between job autonomy as the independent variable and intention to stay as the dependent variable. He used Sobel’s z-test to test whether the mediators carry the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The findings indicated that there were positive and negative relationships among variables. The results also established the presence of mediation effects between the independent and dependent variables. In other words, organizations may utilize work-family facilitation and family satisfaction as mechanisms to promote longer retention among employees.

Vijay Lakshmikanthan and Deepa (2010) contradicts the rosy picture of I.T. employees is commonly believed. Their lives are marked by pressures, hectic schedules and long working hours which take a toll not only on their health, but also relationships at home and social engagements.

Muhammadi Sabra Nadeem and Qaisar Abbas (2009) attempted to study the relationship between work life conflict and job satisfaction in Pakistan. The study found out that job satisfaction is significantly negatively correlated with work to family interference and family to work interference. Job satisfaction is also found to be negatively related with stress in their research. According to him, job autonomy delivers a great deal of job satisfaction to the employees. Supportive employee friendly policy plays a major role in minimizing work life controversy.

Haruko Noguchi (2009) evaluated the effects of work-life balance measures and workplace flexibility on a female worker’s choice and timing of
being reinstated into the labor market after the first childbirth. The results show that (1) female workers who have not come back to work within one year after the first childbirth face a high risk of never being reinstated in the labor market; (2) a decrease in child care costs due to the presence of informal care and an increase in opportunity costs such as profession/skilled or clerical work with high annual income would motivate a female worker to be reinstated into the labor market within a short time period after the first childbirth; and (3) adjusting for the opportunity costs, the accessibility of work-life balance measures still remains a significant positive impact on the probability of a stable female employee to come back to work and thus shortens the length of being on leave.

Aldoory et al. (2008) studied public relations personnel from various organisations and traced their perceptions on their understanding of work-life balance and the challenges thereof. Eight focus groups in four USA metropolitan areas conducted with a total of 50 practitioners revealed several insights into how male and female public relations professionals perceived and strategized work-life balance. Results revealed that both men and women in the study considered “work-life balance” to be a woman’s issue. The challenges that came in the way of work-life balance were identified as societal pressure, contradictions between organizational policies and culture, the unpredictable nature of public relations work, use of technology, perceived professional identity, parenthood and time-shifting process that favoured work.

Macky and Boxall (2008), based on their study among 775 New Zealand employees, found that positive experience of high involvement processes was
associated with higher job satisfaction, lesser job induced stress, lesser fatigue and lesser work life imbalance. However, in situations where pressures to work longer hours were higher, where employees felt overloaded and where managers placed stronger demands on personal time, employees were likely to experience greater dissatisfaction with the jobs, higher stress and fatigue and greater work life imbalance. Increasing the availability of work life balance policies for employees was not found to ameliorate these relationships but a culture of smart working enhanced employee well-being.

Skinner and Pocock (2008) investigated the relationship between work overload, work schedule control, work hours and their fit with preferences and work-life conflict among full-time employees (N=887). It was found that the strongest association with work-life conflict was demonstrated by work overload, followed by work schedule control, work hours and work hours fit. Time-based work life policies, procedures and interventions were found necessary, but not sufficient, for addressing work-life conflict. They called for effective management of work overload to support a healthy work-life relationship.

According to Noon and Blyton (2007), work-life balance refers to the ability of the individuals to pursue successfully their work and non-work lives, without undue pressures from one domain undermining the satisfactory experience of the other. Work-life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual’s right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and
respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society.

Ahmad, Aminah (2007) examined the work-family conflict experienced by 239 married female production operators in dual-career families, the social support they received and the coping strategies used to manage the conflict. The women experienced more work interference with family than family interference with work. The intensity of work interference with family was significantly higher in the earlier life-cycle stage than in the later stage. About two thirds of the women indicated that they intended to leave their job upon having another child, mainly due to the rising cost of childcare services. They received the least social support from their supervisors compared to other sources, and tended to cope with conflict using reactive role behaviour and personal role redefinition strategies.

Premeaux, Adkings and Mossholder (2007) examined the influence of family-friendly policies, work-family culture and family characteristics on job outcomes, work-family conflict and family-work conflict. Results from a survey of 564 employees across seven organizations in America revealed that family-friendly policies exerted minimal effects on conflict between work and family domains and that a positive work culture and family support were instrumental in helping employees balance work and home roles. The minimal effects of family-friendly policies coupled with the positive effects of managerial and family support on all dimensions of work-family conflict suggested that family-friendly policies alone were not enough.
Roberts (2007) traced the sources and outcomes of work life imbalance based on international evidence on hours of work and time use, employees' attitude towards their hours of work and perceptions and complaints about work life imbalance. He stated that the sources of widespread dissatisfaction with current work schedules lay in a combination of trends namely increased labour market participation by women, work intensification, widespread of feelings of job insecurity, odd working hours, the spread of new information and communication technology, free time increasing more slowly than spending power and aspirations and long hours of work becoming the most common phenomenon among employees in higher status jobs.

Sunetra Bhattacharya and Jayanti Basu (2007) analysed the distress, wellness and organizational role stress of professionals in the area of Information Technology. The effect of sex and age on the above variables as well as the predictability of the variables from stressful life events and coping resources taken together were also examined. 101 professionals (60 men and 41 women) were administered on General Health Questionnaire and the coping checklist. Results of the study revealed that women experienced greater wellness and older personnel experienced more distress. Distress could not be predicted from the life events and coping resources taken together. Wellness and organizational role stress could be predicted from these two variables.

Choi, Lee and Paik (2006) studied the effect of perceived family-role conflict on perceived stress and job satisfaction among male commuting workers in South Korea. The term ‘commuting worker’ referred to those who stayed away from their families on account of work. The analysis of the data
collected from 156 white-collar commuting employees revealed that they experienced family-role conflicts and in turn these family-role conflicts aggravated the level of perceived stress in their marriages. To reduce the stress and marital conflicts and to sustain job performance, the researchers called for family-friendly policies like flexible working schedules and additional leave facilities.

Crompton and Lyonette (2006) studied work-life conflict among full-time employees in Britain, France, Finland, Norway and Portugal, and found that employment and domestic stresses contributed to work-life conflict. Further, levels of work-life conflict were significantly higher for women than for men and in households with at least one child compared to childless households. Professional or managerial workers experienced significantly higher work conflict compared to lower cadre employees. Also, younger full time employees reported higher work-life conflict than older full-time employees. Longer weekly working hours also meant higher work-life conflict.

Golden, Veiga and Simsek (2006) by surveying 454 professional telecommuting employees examined how extensively working in this mode impacted work-to-family conflict and family-to-conflict. The findings suggested that telecommuting had a differential impact on work-family conflict. The more extensively individuals worked in this mode, the lower was their work-to-family conflict, but the higher was their family-to-work conflict. Additionally, job autonomy and scheduling flexibility were found to positively moderate telecommuting’s impact on work-to-family conflict, but household size was found to negatively moderate telecommuting’s impact on family-to-
work conflict, suggesting that contextual factors could be domain specific. They concluded that the more extensively individuals telecommute, the less work interfered with family thereby reducing work-to family conflict and the more family interfered with work resulting in increasing family-to-work conflict.

The experience of and attitudes towards work-life balance among senior management personnel in a major Irish organisation were traced by Drew and Murtagh (2005). Based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected from female and male senior managers, it was found that most of the respondents did not avail the flexible work options owing to their organizational positions and work expectations. The senior manager’s use of existing work-life programmes was restricted owing to fears of their career prospects in jeopardy. Consequently, the long hours culture had a bearing on work-life balance. To promote work-life balance, most of the respondents sought measures to address the long hours culture work from home option and practice work-life balance policy.

Helen, et al. (2005) have reported a link between an organization’s commitment to work-life balance policies and the employee’s commitment to the organization. This study of civil engineers reported higher commitment, job satisfaction, and lower turnover intention when the employees’ perceived their organization to be supportive of work-life balance initiatives. These results provide evidence that work-life balance policies are related to organizational performance in the Australian construction industry. Work-life balance policies
are also reported to improve organizations' competitiveness by increasing their ability to attract employees.

In the Indian context, Singh and Pandy (2005) in their study on the employment aspects of women (N=100) in call centers found that 90 per cent of the respondents had difficulties balancing work and personal life. The nature of job restricted their social life, curtailed their participation in the family, had health implications and stress. Work-life balance was eased through support for domestic work and adjustments between the married couples.

Toth (2005) examined the gendered nature of work-life policies and the work-life conflicts of managers in an MNC in Hungary based on 30 qualitative interviews with male and female managers at junior, middle and senior management levels. The results showed that while legislative measures for family leave-related policies were being encouraged in the European union, this was not the case with employer organizations in transition nations like Hungary. The research revealed that attempts to introduce family-friendly policies still created gendered effects and dilemmas for individual managers. Also, men and women had different perceptions of work-life balance and adopted different coping strategies to manage work and family commitments. However taking an overall view, it was found that work life balance was construed as an individual, rather than a corporate responsibility and this also created gendered inequalities.

Harris (2004) stated that among expatriates, the boundaries between work and home became blurred due to the involvement of the whole family and there was often disruption of traditional family roles causing increasing stress.
Work demands and work-life conflict were also likely to be high for the female expatriate due to the combined effect of role and culture novelty. He concluded that work-life issues were likely to have a more significant impact on adjustment for women on international assignments as a result of differing gender role expectation in both home and host countries.

Yasbek (2004) in his research study has concluded that I.T. employers expect the employees to be 24/7 servants with utter disregard to the private life of the employees. Though they may institutionalize work life policies to seemingly help employees to achieve work life balance, their real intention is to exploit the employees to the maximum possible level and they have a pseudo concern for the private life of the employees.

Greenhaus, et al. (2003) examined the relation between work-family balance and quality of life among professionals employed in public accounting. Work-family balance was traced in terms of time balance (equal level of psychological involvement in work and family roles), involvement balance (equal level of psychological involvement in work and family roles) and satisfaction balance (equal level of satisfaction with work and family roles). Individuals who invested equitable time in their work and family roles and those who spent more time on family than work experienced higher quality of life than those who spent more time on work than family. Similar findings were made with regard to involvement and satisfaction balance. However, when individuals invested relatively little of their time or involvement in their combined work and family roles, or when they derived little satisfaction from their combined roles, work-family balance was unrelated to quality of life.
Jeffre H Greenhaus, et al. (2003) examined the relation between work–family balance and quality of life among professionals employed in public accounting. Three components of work–family balance were assessed: time balance (equal time devoted to work and family), involvement balance (equal involvement in work and family), and satisfaction balance (equal satisfaction with work and family). For individuals who invested substantial time in their combined work and family roles and those who spent more time on family than work experienced a higher quality of life than the balanced individuals who, in turn, experienced a higher quality of life and than those who spent more time on work than family. The study observed similar findings for involvement and satisfaction.

Morgan (2003) outlined that the I.T. employers mindlessly exploit the software engineers without any limit. Though they seem to operationalise the work life balance policies, they do not allow the employees to attend to their family thereby enhancing the quality of family life. In the name of flexi time, part time, work home, job sharing, etc. they continue to invade the private life of the techies in their greed to maximize the profit.

Amato and Previti. (2003) reviewed the impact of increasing women participation in the organized sector in our country. The joint family system is slowly giving way to nuclear family and single family system. Yet there has been no perceptible change in the household responsibilities to be discharged by women folk. He strongly views that the career women have to inevitably bear household responsibilities thereby suffering from work life mismatch.
Therefore he advocated a shift in the mindset of the society in favour of career women.

Burke (2002) observes that both women and men prefer working in organisations that support work-life balance. Men appear to benefit more than women. Men feel more satisfied when they achieve more on the job even at the cost of ignoring the family. On the other hand, women stress that work and family are both equally important and both are the sources of their satisfaction. For them the former is more important. When work does not permit women to take care of their family, they feel unhappy, disappointed and frustrated. They draw tight boundaries between work and family and they do not like one crossing the others.

Fu and Shaffer (2001) distinguish between two different directions of role interference, namely family-to-work and work-to-family interference. The determinants for the first role arise from the family domain whilst work-to-family interference arises from the family domain. They suggest that the determinants are unique to the six dimensions of work-family conflict. They have found that determinants arising from the work domain have much stronger effects and are significant contributors to time and strain based work to family conflict. Supervisor’s social support is found to reduce strain and behaviour based work-to-family conflict.

Parasuraman and Simmers (2001) found that self-employed persons experienced more work-family conflict than those who were employed in organisations. Men reported more work-family conflict than women. The reasons attributed to the same were the need for greater commitment to work
on the part of men compared to women and the consequent desire to spend more time at home. Women reported less work-family conflict because of greater schedule flexibility.

Higgins, Duxbury and Johnson (2000) studied the effect of part-time work on work-family balance among women employees. Employees were classified as career employees and earner employees. Career employees were those in managerial or professional positions. Earner employees were those in clerical, administrative, retail or production jobs. Factors attributed to working part-time included prioritizing on family, avoiding the stress of full-time work and convenient work hours. They found that although part-time work facilitated the logistics of time management for women in both career and earner positions, the overall perception of work-family conflict was a function of the specific job context. The role of part-time work in promoting work-life balance depended on the centrality of work in the lives of the employees and also on job-specific differences like work demands.

Carlson and Perrewé (1999) found that the quality of relationships that an employee had with the supervisor, co-workers and subordinates was related to the reduced perceived role stressors (conflict, ambiguity and overload) and decreased work-family conflict.

Hill, Miller, Weiner and Colinhan (1998), in their study among international Business Machines Corporation employees, explored the influence of virtual office on aspects of work and work-life balance. The comparative study was conducted among a group of virtual office teleworkers (N=157) and another group of traditional office workers (N= 89). Both
qualitative and quantitative analyses revealed that virtual telework promoted productivity, morale and flexibility. However, there was no significant relationship between telework and work-life balance. While some respondents reported that telework helped manage both work and personal life better, some admitted that it resulted in blurring of the work and family boundary.

Papalexandris and Kramar (1997) stated that individual variables could also influence work life balance. They include age, sex, qualification, pay, professional aspirations and family status as well as attitudes, expectations and priorities assigned to the various roles by both partners.

Thomas and Ganster (1995) found that perceptions of supervisor supportiveness were positively associated with perceptions of control over work and family matters, with such control in turn being linked with lower levels of work-family conflict and other psychological and physiological indicators of strain.

Judith H. Larosa (1990) probed the performance of select women executives at the higher level. She found that the women executives at the higher echelons of the management did not ignore their health in the process of achieving the various goals of the organization. The excellent medical facility extended by the employer, strong social support and greater life satisfaction enabled them to strike a balance between work and family.

(iv) Studies on Problems of Women Employees

Sophia J. Ali (2011) investigated the challenges facing women in career development in Kapsabet Municipality, Kenya. She found that most of the
women employees were dissatisfied with career development programmes and women were discriminated against in career development opportunities. The study recommended that organizations should strive to ensure that career development programmes were set to enhance career development amongst women employees. Top management should also be committed to the career development of women, and organizations should also introduce affirmative action to urgently address career development of women.

Buddhapriya (2009) studied the impact of family responsibilities on the career decisions of women professionals and traced the work-life support solicited by them from their employers. The study carried out among 121 women professionals about the barriers in their career progression which includes commitment to family responsibilities, male stereotyping and lack of gender sensitive policies by employers. Organizational support for maintaining work-family challenges included flexible working hours, on-site child care facilities, support for non-work commitments and wellness and personal development programmes.

Armstrong (2003) argued that men and women face many challenges as they advance through careers. However, women have reported greater barriers than men and greater difficulties in getting development assignment and geographical mobility opportunities.

Carla D Kimberling (2002) investigated the women administrators employed by the Wisconsin Technical College System to determine the barriers attributed by gender differences. She found that the college had to slash down glass ceiling and include more women in the system since the college was
found to be predominantly manned by men folk. She also noticed the existence of pay inequity between the genders. She suggested systems and practices to wipe out gender discrimination practised in the college and strongly advocated equitable pay for the job carrying similar work responsibilities.

Deery, Iverson and Walsh (2002) found that where team leaders were seen as willing to listen to the work-related problems of their staff and showed an ability to assist and support them, the level of emotional exhaustion amongst the team members was significantly lower.

Ruderman and Ohlott (2002) viewed that isolation, balancing family and career, dealing with stereotypical labels and learning to work are some of the forces that affect the career women in the corporate sector and in turn, affect the amount or recognition they receive.

Scholte (2002) states that global market has substantially increased women’s access to paid labour. On issues other than employment, contemporary globalization has generally done little to reverse gender-based hierarchies of opportunity.

Eswari (2000) reveals that the women employees are increasingly exploited by the employer in the post-liberalization phase while it is heartening to observe the growing presence of women in work place across the cadres. Inherent feminine traits like submissiveness, humility, patience, tolerance and non assertiveness are misused to extract more work from them.

Rehana Queresh (2000) who investigated different problems faced by working women in Faisalabad reported that inability to give quality time to the
family members and the consequent deterioration in relationship among the family members, inability to attend social functions to build up their social relations, commuting to work place and home sickness were the problems afflicting the working women.

Brown and Merchant (1993) cite four related barriers for women seeking administrative positions: absence of role models for women; lack of support and encouragement from others; lack of sponsorship within and without the organization and lack of supportive networks. Demeaning cultural practices have been perpetrated against women for centuries. Women have been deliberately pushed to the periphery of life in society.

The review cited above grouped under four heads namely studies on women employees in general, studies on women employees in I.T. sector, studies on work life balance across the sectors and studies on problems of women employees highlight the following facts;

The literature pertaining to studies on women employees in general across the globe and in India deal with

(i) growing presence of women in the top echelons of management

(ii) women after crossing 35 years of age cannot continue to work due to their inability to strike work life balance.

(iii) practising general discrimination in the recruitment, pay, performance rating decisions, career advancement, etc. in certain sectors.

(v) revamping labour policies in India to address the gender issues
Review of studies on women employees in the I.T. sector in India brings to the fore the issue of inability of Indian working women in I.T. sector to strike balance between the work life and home life, inability to attend to the children and elders, dislocation of family on transfer, foreign assignment and deputation, marriage and the consequent relocation, etc.

Factors like marriage, child care, baby care, elder care, relocation, housekeeping, cooking responsibilities, absence of support system, dual responsibilities, etc. were identified to be the factors triggering work life mismatch in many studies conducted in Indian context. The findings of studies conducted abroad on work life conflict are more or less in line with Indian studies. Most of the studies recommended a shift in the organisational policies in favour of promoting active women participation in various roles in the organisation. Some studies have advocated considering special privileges like opportunity to join the place where spouse is working, condoning career break during the maternity period, relaxing shift work norms for women employees with infant child, telecommuting facility, part time job etc., to check the quit of women employees in the event of their inability to balance work and home life.

The literature relating to problems faced by women employees in other sectors surfaced the problems like gender discrimination in promotional matters, sexual harassment, rumour mongering, inequitable work load, lack of support from the family members, the inevitable role of being home maker and so on. The Western literature dealing with the plight of women employees sheds light on fewer role models for women employees, very limited
opportunities provided to women in the leadership roles, lesser geographical mobility, paucity of motivation, absence of recognition for extraordinary talents, biased performance rating, etc. Some authors have recommended solutions like delegation of authority, reservation for promotion for women folk, institution of awards for star performers representing women folk, fine-tuning HR policies to facilitate active women participation in leadership roles, counselling to family members for women folk, mentoring women employees to accept challenging work, etc.

Some studies have provided remedies like revamping organisational policies, flexi time, job sharing, telecommuting, part time work, work home, etc. to enable the women employees to combat. A keen observation of the various pieces of literature pertaining to women employees reveals that most of the studies have investigated the women employees working in a given cadre. In other words, studies have been conducted exclusively on middle level or higher level or on overall employees.

The cadre wise analysis is limited. Most of the studies center around work life conflict either in I.T. sector or in non-I.T. sector. Many studies have been conducted on the problems faced by women employees in general across the sector. Studies relating to work life balance and work performance are limited. It also manifests that research studies measuring the impact of problems of women employees on work performance are a few in number and so are the research studies investigating the impact of personal variables on the work life balance and the problems.
In this context a composite study investigating work life balance across the cadre, the influence of personal variables on work life balance, relationship between work life balance and work performance, problems faced by women employees across the cadre, influence of personal variables on problems, etc. in respect of women employees in I.T. sector is needed to contribute to scanty literature available in these areas. Since most of the studies have been conducted in manufacturing sector and other service sectors in India and abroad, a composite survey on women employees on the various areas cited above in the I.T. sector still remains an area left unresearched. Therefore the present study is conducted on women employees across the cadre in select I.T. firms in Chennai.

Having identified the research gap an attempt is made to study the influence of profile variables on work life balance and work performance of women employees in the next chapter.