

Work/Family Conflict and Career Advancement : Demographic Differences as Moderators Among IT Employees

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Abstract

India's information technology (IT) is the world's largest sourcing destination, providing direct and indirect employment for more than 10 million people. It is seen that the IT sector in India always looks for career advancement. This study analyzed the work/family conflict of Indian IT employees and its influence on career advancement with demographic variables: age, gender, and marital status as moderators. The data were gathered from 392 respondents employed in Indian IT organizations. With the help of SPSS 21.0, the data were analyzed with descriptive statistics, correlation, and hierarchical regression, and the Hayes methodology and interaction software explained the moderators. It was observed that career advancement and work/family conflict had a favorable association which may vary in a particular state. It was also revealed that age acted as a moderator of all demographic differences selected in the study. Therefore, the article suggested that work/family conflict may positively or negatively influence career advancement.

Keywords : career advancement, control variables, moderators, IT (Information Technology), work/family conflict

JEL Classification Codes : J10, M12, M15, M51

Paper Submission Date : June 30, 2021 ; **Paper sent back for Revision :** April 21, 2022 ; **Paper Acceptance Date :** May 30, 2022 ; **Paper Published Online :** September 15, 2022

Although former studies related career advancement (CA) with personal strategies and organizational strategies (Martins et al., 2002; Powell & Mainiero, 1992), the latest research has begun to associate with work/family conflict (WFC) (Kumari & Vangapandu, 2021), career experiences, promotion rate, and career satisfaction (Patwardhan et al., 2018). Also, CA is associated with demographic factors such as age, gender, education, and marital status (Patwardhan et al., 2018). Many reviews identified that WFC is one of the important factors influencing CA in IT organizations (Powell & Butterfield, 2013). Moreover, the study is said to be the rising interest of researchers in India (Budhwar & Varma, 2010).

India's IT industry is considered one of the world's most substantial sourcing destinations. It was reported that around 67% of the US market (\$124 – 130 billion) was occupied by the IT industry, and almost 13 million people work in the Indian IT industry (Kala et al., 2017). With this, the IT sector had an extended opportunity (Pattanaik & Nayak, 2011). It was said that the majority of the IT projects were handled by developed countries. Therefore, Indian companies need to match their working schedule and working style with international clients' requirements. Also, for more projects, IT companies promise their clients to deliver the projects in the shortest time possible, which might lead to tough deadlines (Kala et al., 2017). With this, all employees started focussing on their CA (Calisir et al., 2011). Through this, IT employees' jobs were designed to spend more time with their clients, and they were encouraged to travel worldwide (Rustagi, 2010). Therefore, increased work prevented them

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from managing family roles (Pham et al., 2020) and increased conflict among their roles (Ruppanner & Huffman, 2014). So, the IT industry has to concentrate on the outcomes of WFC (Lu et al., 2016). Out of those consequences, CA is identified as one of the significant outcomes (Karlapudi, 2022). With this, like any other organization, the IT sector always looks at WFC's influence on CA for their employees (Verma & Singh, 2020). There is a need for every industry to look upon the fiscal advantages and occupational future of their employees (Dai & Song, 2016). So, it is required to give importance to WFC as a determinant of CA (Karlapudi, 2022).

Most of the studies in the IT industry explored human resource factors (Ravindran & Baral, 2014), challenges (Donnelly, 2015), and incorporations (Buddhapriya, 2013), and there are limited articles that identified the relation between WFC and CA (Martins et al., 2002). Hence, there is a gap in identifying the cause of the positive or negative relationship between WFC and CA. Moreover, WFC is examined with identified moderators and mediators at different levels, which had not resulted in any direct effect. Therefore, concerning this, there is an objective formulated to study WFC and CA and demographic differences (i.e.) age, gender, and marital status as moderators (Kumari, 2021).

Therefore, the article primarily presents a model that is initiated with WFC and CA. In addition, WFC and CA are also analyzed with the moderator's effect on age, gender, and marital status.

Literature Review

The IT sector is well known for its quality structure and software establishments (Kumari & Vangapandu, 2021). The IT sector always looks for the latest development in knowledge, skills, and techniques in which their employees are trained (Majumder, 2016). So, this continuous improvement of skills and increase in knowledge make the techies more pledged with their work roles, thereby avoiding family roles. This may obstruct the roles and responsibilities of work and family (Okkonen et al., 2018). And, also, it might increase the involvement of work roles with personal roles and personal roles with work roles and thereby CA (Semwal & Dhyani, 2017). So, it is understood that IT professional employees are different from other professional employees. Therefore, in the present scenario, it is identified to be a challenge for the IT industry (Purushothaman & Kaviya, 2020).

Generally, techies work in a company that would pervade them (Suhasini & Kalpana, 2018). It might so happen that they leave their CA due to WFC (Omar & Tajudeen, 2020). In the study done by Kumari and Vangapandu (2021), it is identified that in the IT sector, there is a simulation to honor the workers who are passionate about working hard for their CA. This might extend their work schedules (Pandey & Sharma, 2016). With this, it is identified that there is a limited analysis that has worked on WFC and CA (Karlapudi, 2022).

Influence of WFC and CA

For the past 20 years, there has been increased attention on the consequences of WFC. Among such identified consequences is CA (Kumari & Vangapandu, 2021). In general, every employee has two domains in their life. One is work, and another is the family. They are two folded components (Clarke, 2013). So, there is a conflict between the two components as they don't match well all the time (Krys et al., 2018) since work involves family components and family involves work components, creating an imbalance between the two domains. Therefore, this might impact the quality of work life, which would further influence CA (Karlapudi, 2022). Also, a constant change in work schedules and the performance of multiple tasks would also affect WFC and CA (Singe & Mensch, 2021). Therefore, decreasing WFC and achieving CA would be a challenge for IT employees (Kumari & Vangapandu, 2021). This study on WFC asserted that CA generally has a negative relationship (Yusuf & Hasnidar, 2020).

🔗 **H01 :** The higher the WFC, the lower the CA (negative relationship).

Perceived Demographic Differences as Moderator with WFC and CA

Gender as a Moderator

Gender is termed to play a significant role between WFC and CA (Hodgson, 2002). It had been identified that gender variations highly influence career and WFC (Abele & Spurk, 2009). With the change in gender roles in working conditions (Ghislieri et al., 2017), work conflicts are increasing. As per the gender role theory, the gender of the employees would result in different demands leading to differences in the level of WFC (Rajadhyaksha et al., 2015). It is identified that female workers experience more career breaks and WFC when compared to male workers due to their priority toward family roles than work roles (Watts et al., 2015). Due to this, female workers in Indian organizations (Chin, 2016) have more intention to quit their careers or job if they found imbalanced roles (Morgan & King, 2012). This influences female CA (Agarwal et al., 2016). Hence, it is said that gender differences influence WFC and CA (Abele & Spurk, 2009). Hence, it is hypothesized that :

↳ **H2a :** Gender moderates the relation between WFC and CA.

Age as a Moderator

There are only a few studies that focused on age as a moderator between WFC and CA. Earlier research analyzed how WFC and CA differed in different age groups (Matthews et al., 2010). These studies identified that there might be a positive or negative or no relationship between age and WFC (Allen, 2001; Greenglass et al., 1998; Grzywacz et al., 2002). Age performs as a moderator between WFC and CA with the increase in experience and demands in work and family roles (Treadway et al., 2005). In the IT industry, most youngsters work overtime for CA to grab comfort (Rathore & Ahuja, 2015). As the employees reach middle age, they focus on balancing work and family when assessing their CA (Gordon & Whelan, 1998). The CA for senior employees is negatively affected by WFC compared with youngsters and middle-aged employees. Therefore, the extent of WFC on CA would depend upon the employee age in the Indian IT industry (Kumari & Vangapandu, 2021).

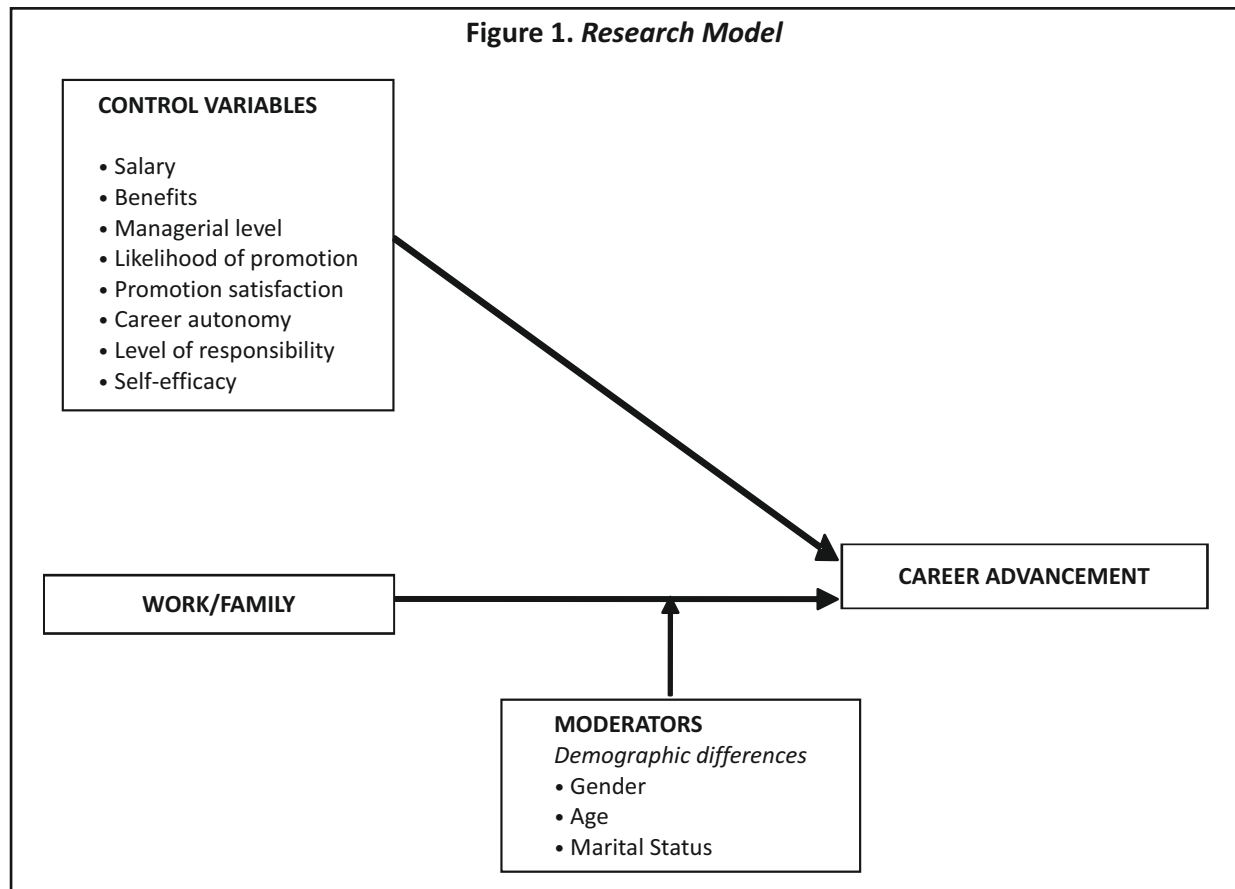
↳ **H2b :** Age moderates the relation between WFC and CA.

Marital Status

One of the identified factors that influence WFC and CA is marital status (Landau & Arthur, 1992). As per Human Capital Theory (HCT), while recruiting employees, employers consider marital status as a proxy before deciding on salary and allocating workload. This is because married employees are more focused on family roles and less on CA when compared with unmarried employees. This is high with married employees looking for convenience and flexible jobs with less salary to avoid juggling their role duties (McGinn, 2015). Hence, it is understood that unmarried techies have more space for CA and less WFC when compared with married employees with or without children. According to wife resource theory (WRT), a female working wife would like to help her husband's career than expect his support for her career growth. This would decrease the level of career growth of female working wives when compared to unmarried female workers and encourage their husbands to have more time on CA-related activities (Chauhan et al., 2022).

↳ **H2c :** Marital status moderates the relation between WFC and CA.

From the reviews collected, the current study aims to understand the relationship between WFC and CA with the moderators included. Figure 1 shows the research model of the study.



Research Methodology

The present study has been conducted by using the descriptive research method. To obtain the data, the convenience sampling method is taken. Here, the study uses a structured questionnaire for the collection of data. The targeted population of the study is IT employees (techies) working in MNCs and private IT companies.

Sample Frame

The data were collected from 392 IT employees employed in different IT companies. The data were collected from May – August 2020. Overall, 600 questionnaires were issued among the IT employees working in selected areas in India. Among these, 422 questionnaires were collected from the respondents. The 30 questionnaires were incomplete. So, a total of 392 filled respondents' details were considered for the study. Among them, 43.3% of the respondents were from private companies, and 56.7% of the respondents were from MNCs. The sample frame included the respondents from Bangalore (29.8%), Hyderabad (27%), Chennai (12.9%), Delhi (13%), Pune (10%), and Kolkata (7.3%).

Measurement Variables

Measurement variables include control, dependent, and independent variables. With the help of the identified and

referred studies, the selected items were used for designing the questionnaire. With the help of the Likert 5 - point scaling technique, each item is measured from *strongly agree* (5) to *strongly disagree* (1).

(1) Control Variables. CA is controlled by different variables like salary, benefits, managerial level, likelihood, promotion satisfaction, career autonomy, level of responsibility, and self-efficacy. Sample items are “I am certain about the promotions that I will get further” developed by Caplan et al. (1975). “I am satisfied with my chances for promotion” given by Spector (1985). The scale used is from “*strongly agree*” (5) to “*strongly disagree*” (1).

(2) Dependent Variables. Two items developed by Carlson et al. (2000) were considered to measure CA. The sample item is “My family roles stop me from obtaining career advancement.” The scale used is from “*strongly agree*” (5) to “*strongly disagree*” (1).

(3) Independent Variables. Eleven items given by Carlson et al. (2000), Duxbury et al. (1992), and Stephens and Sommer (1993) were used to measure WFC. The sample item is “After work, I feel stress reaching home.” The scale used is from “*strongly agree*” (5) to “*strongly disagree*” (1).

Moderating Variables. The moderating variable included in the study is a demographic difference which consists of gender, age, and marital status. The gender is coded with male (1) and female (2), age measured within the range of 20 – 35, 36 – 50, and 51 – 65, and marital status is coded with unmarried (1) and married with (2).

Statistical Tools

Using SPSS 21.0, the surveyed data is analyzed. The mean and SD are explained with descriptive statistics analysis. With the application of correlation and hierarchical regression, the hypotheses are tested. Finally, with Hayes's (2018) methodology and interaction software, the moderator's relationship between the variables is explained.

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha is applied to test the reliability of the data. Table 1 gives the alpha value of the independent and dependent variables. The values of the variables are reliable.

Sample Characteristics

The sample characteristics of the respondents included gender, marital status, age, experience, and income. Out of the respondents, 56.7% were males, and 43.3% were females. In the case of marital status, 65.7% were married employees, and 34.3% were unmarried employees. Regarding age, most of the respondents (43.3%) belonged to the age between 20 – 35 years. Regarding experience, 36.2% of the respondents had between 6 – 10 years of experience. In the case of income, most of the IT respondents, that is, 40%, earned between ₹ 50,000 – ₹ 100,000 per month.

Table 1. Alpha Value (Reliability) of the Variables

No.	Variables	No. of items	α Value
1.	WFC	11	0.779
2.	CA	2	0.816

Analysis and Results

Based on the data analyzed, the following output is determined. From Table 2, the mean and SD (standard deviation) are determined with descriptive statistics. Table 3 explains the hierarchical regression analysis for CA. Table 3 has been entered in four steps. In step 1, the control variables are included (model 1). Step 2 includes the independent variable WFC (model 2). Step 3 includes moderators (model 3), that is, demographic differences (age, marital status, and gender). Finally, step 4 includes the interaction of WFC with demographic differences, which is suggested by Aiken et al. (1991).

Control variables in Table 3 (model 1) show that the majority of the variables do not affect the CA except for benefits which are significant at $p < 0.001$. Hypothesis 1 (H01) states that WFC negatively influences CA. As given in Table 3 (model 2), ($b = .561, p < .001$), there is a positive relationship between the variables among the techie employees. So, it is understood that WFC influences CA. It means the greater the career advanced, the higher will be the conflict. Therefore H01 is accepted.

Hypothesis 2a (H2a) states that gender moderates the relation between WFC and CA. The interaction of gender and WFC is not significant in Table 3 (model 4) and also when entered into the hierarchical regression equation in a previous step (model 3). Hence, it is understood that gender does not moderate the relation between WFC and CA. Therefore, H2a is rejected.

Hypothesis 2b (H2b) states that age moderates the relation between WFC and CA. The interaction of age and WFC is found to be significant in Table 3 (model 4), which means H2b is accepted.

Hypothesis 2c (H2c) defines that marital status will moderate the relationship between WFC and CA. It is found that the value is not significant in Table 3 (model 4). But when entered in the previous step (model 3), it is found to be significant at $p < 0.001$. Therefore, H2c is not supported and hence rejected.

Table 2. Correlations

	Mean	Std. Dev	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	1.67	.71													
2	1.51	.5	-.302**												
3	1.72	.44	.496**	-.170**											
4	3.01	.65	.196**	-.118*	.208**										
5	2.80	.96	.392**	-.118*	.374**	-.060									
6	3.24	.88	.022	.197**	.006	-.163**	.031								
7	1.64	.87	.271**	-.138**	.218**	.089	.007	.094							
8	3.61	.81	-.128*	.025	-.169**	-.174**	.051	.197**	.083						
9	3.24	.81	.078	.084	.204**	-.152**	.092	.397**	.228**	.245**					
10	4.06	.72	-.115*	.023	-.242**	.066	-.232**	.162**	.154**	.164**	.105*				
11	3.69	.72	.029	.016	.039	.032	-.196**	-.057	.194**	-.107*	-.086	.166**			
12	4.17	.68	-.185**	.152**	-.237**	.028	-.215**	.117*	-.007	.149**	-.021	.672**	.108*		
13	2.61	.72	.179**	-.041	.359**	.567**	.108*	-.185**	.061	-.092	-.006	-.107*	-.028	.104*	

Note. 1. Age ; 2. Gender ; 3. Marital status ; 4. WFC ; 5. Salary ; 6. Benefits ; 7. Managerial level ; 8. Likelihood of promotion ; 9. Promotion satisfaction ; 10. Career autonomy ; 11. Level of responsibility ; 12. Self-efficacy ; 13. CA.

Table 3. Regression Analysis of CA

Items	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Control Variables				
Salary	.069	.080**	.047	.031
Benefits	-.164***	-.107**	-.122***	-.142***
Managerial level	.069	.006	-.016	-.001
Likelihood of promotion	-.065	.014	.031	.041
Promotion satisfaction	.058	.115**	.055	.089*
Career autonomy	-.046	-.111*	-.068	-.071
Level of responsibility	-.030	-.002	-.001	-.021
Self-efficacy	-.015	-.008	-.030	-.025
Independent Variables				
WFC (WFC)		.561***	.658***	.443
Moderators				
Demographic Differences				
Age			-.074	-.140**
Marital Status			.375***	.398***
Gender			.082	.074**
Interaction Items				
Gender × WFC				.098
Age × WFC				-.348***
Marital Status × WFC				-.089
R^2	.66	.376	.427	.486
Adjusted R^2	.046	.361	.401	.450
F	3.369***	89.980***	4.144***	5.216***
ΔR^2	.066	.310	.051	.059

Note. $N = 392$ * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

The current study investigates the relationship between WFC and CA through the moderator effect as demographic differences. It is identified that the work nature of IT would make the techies CA doubtful (Kumari & Vangapandu, 2021). As discussed by Hughes et al. (2013), techies always spend most of their time on projects, interact with their clients, and regularly travel within and outside India. By this, it is perceived that techies are given the workforce accordingly. Due to their workforce, they might find it difficult to complete their home tasks or family roles (Pham et al., 2020).

In general, it is identified that WFC has an anti-relationship with CA (Martins et al., 2002) when :

- ☞ The effect of WFC on CA varies far off with demographic differences.
- ☞ In the case under certain conditions, WFC presents to have a favorable effect on CA.

Under the study, there are two vital questions that are given :

➤ Relation between WFC and CA.

➤ Demographic differences as moderator relationship between WFC and CA.

As per the results, it is observed that the study brings out a new perception that WFC has a favorable (positive) relationship with CA compared to past studies, which had a negative relationship with CA. This might mean that diligent and successful employees can be pictured to have increased conflict in work/family roles. According to the model given in the study, CA is required to have committed time and work. Constant commitment to CA may lead to stress, influencing work/family domains. Hence, it can be perceived that there is a dissenting relation between WFC and CA. Here, the study primarily examines the relations of the control variable with CA. Most of the control variables considered in the study do not significantly affect CA, meaning the control variables do not considerably impact CA among IT employees (Kumari, 2021).

Extent research found that gender does not moderate the relation between WFC and CA for techie employees. As proposed in the gender theory, the male worker's primary domain is the job; for female workers, it is the household (Rajadhyaksha et al., 2015). Recently, researchers showed a few pieces of evidence that there is a minor change in the preferences of men and women. Many women nowadays are given a great choice in their work and careers; whereas, men actively engage in family responsibilities. These results would change the context highlighting the requirements to investigate gender differences between WFC and CA (Brough et al., 2014). It states that career identification for male and female employees are alike than often declared (Sweet et al., 2016). Sometimes, irrespective of gender, their relationship is affected by the relationship between the WFC and CA in the IT sector (Thriveni Kumari, 2020). Here, both men and women strive to achieve a steady professional and personal life (Sudhindra et al., 2020).

The output also shows that age with WFC on CA had a negative relationship. It means CA would be higher and WFC would be less for elderly aged employees (Kumari & Vangapandu, 2021). Elderly age group employees with a low level of WFC can be open to work situations and work with more confidence (Jex et al., 2002). This would increase their CA, and also, the output of the result reinforced that depending on the age group, IT employees prefer to go with CA (Kumari & Vangapandu, 2021). This is because most middle-aged and young-aged groups of employees are bounded with responsibilities like taking care of children and elders, which might affect their career growth (Purushothaman & Kaviya, 2020). With this, there might be unimproved CA (Omar & Tajudeen, 2020). Therefore, being a moderator, age would affect the relationship between WFC and CA (Kumari & Vangapandu, 2021).

But in the case of marital status, the results identified that it does not moderate the relation between WFC and CA. It is said that employees who are bachelor/single would overcome a lower level of WFC compared to married employees (Van Steenberg et al., 2014) since they have fewer family responsibilities, conflicts, and more freedom (Anafarta & Kuruüzüm, 2012). Also, the impact of marital status between WFC and CA would depend upon the spouse and family support (Karlapudi, 2022).

Therefore, it is understood that there is not much impact of demographic differences as moderators of WFC and CA. One of the reasons might be due to the nature of the IT job analysis, which would ruin the techie's demographic differences, thereby leading to role conflict (Calisir et al., 2011).

Implications

Managerial Implications

The employer and employee must recognize a suitable action plan for managing WFC and CA. It is observed that the employees who are motivated and supported in career development would carry out their family roles within

the boundary line. This might make them have their career and life balanced. Organizations should see that they give autonomy to employees to allocate time for their career activities and chances (Ballout, 2008).

An employee should see that they integrate both the domain roles simultaneously with the help of a supervisor, family, spouse, and domestic, which would reduce WFC and increase the chances of CA. Organizations with a supportive environment have been observed to help employees overcome their family demands and advance their career progress (Karlupudi, 2022). Organizations should work actively on conducting career-related programs for all employees, like mentoring, sponsorship, career growth, and opportunities programs, use of friendly benefits in the company to reduce their conflict and achieve potentiality in career progress (Ballout, 2008).

There is a need for IT companies to improve monetary rewards, provide flexible work nature, and promotions that would help them for CA and help them to balance work and family relationships. Otherwise, it might lead to an increase in turnover and a decrease in commitment and encourage them to search for a career that fulfills their expectations. Finally, an organization must consider providing better infrastructure that decreases WFC and increases productivity for CA (Ballout, 2008).

Theoretical Implications

It is necessary to recognize the determinations that are more beneficial for IT employees to reduce WFC and CA. There is a need to study such determinants that influence IT employees. This study has investigated the impact of WFC on CA with control variables and moderators as demographic differences. A relatively narrow study is done on managers and a higher level of employees. The studies primarily investigate the WFC and CA of IT employees. But fewer studies identified that monetary rewards, flexible work nature, and promotions would influence CA. From the study findings, it is identified that only age moderates the relation between WFC and CA, ignoring other demographic variables. Also, there is a need to focus on environmental support variables such as organization support and family support. The study observes a positive relationship between WFC and CA, testing the negative effect mentioned in the literature on IT employees.

Conclusion

Finally, to conclude the study, retaining employees for a longer period is very strenuous and remarkable in all sectors. In India, many organizations have been habituated to exercising work-family balancing policies so that they can retain their employees for a longer time period. Personal and organizational factors influence CA (Kurup et al., 2020). With this, both the employer and employee can focus on understanding the factors that affect CA. Also, there is a need to upgrade the career modes with the current scenario in the workforce, which is crucial.

Furthermore, IT companies have to work on the following line of action to overcome the competition (Cano et al., 2013):

- (1)** Knowledge sharing to strengthen teamwork.
- (2)** The concept of the demand life cycle improves the needs of the customers.
- (3)** Align with business strategy to work more systematically.

Moreover, there is a need for IT companies to look upon environmental support such as superior support, peer support (Karlupudi, 2022), come up with appropriate organizational facilities, a supportive work environment, and decreased workload (Pham et al., 2020). There is also a need to focus on employee training and career development (Kumari & Vangapandu, 2021). Therefore, ultimately, there is a need for academic progress that is significantly required to develop a nation (Arokiasamy et al., 2011).

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The study observes that there is low reliability of the variables. This might be due to the size of the sample considered in the study and the number of items considered. Even though the problem is considered to be universal in India, limited areas in India (particularly South India) were considered in the study. This might be due to a shortage of time and the pandemic environment. With this, the sample is confined to a few identified cities which have more IT companies. Another limitation is that the respondents of the study were not reported within the granted. Despite these restrictions, the study is carried out with the utmost benefits and results.

The present study proposes that there is an effective way to understand the association between WFC and CA. Much of the study concentrates on the relationship between WFC and CA, and, thereby, how demographic differences act as moderators linking them. However, there is a need to study factors affecting CA, particularly work nature, organizational support, and friendly policies. With the change in career needs, there is a need to research employee succession planning (Clarke, 2013). Also, there is a need to understand other active moderators such as family support, peer support, and organizational policies.

Moreover, the study cannot be confined to one sector as it is a universal problem. The study can be extended to other sectors, such as banking, medical, and insurance, where there is a low focus on these variables. Moreover, knowledge management and talent management were discovered to be practical variables of CA (Saquifa et al., 2015).

Author's Contribution

Dr. K. Thriveni Kumari conceived the idea and developed qualitative and quantitative designs to undertake the empirical study. She extracted research papers with high reputations, filtered these based on keywords, and shortlisted the analytical methods. She wrote the manuscript by considering the existing literature related to the topic and reporting all the empirical results. She also highlighted the importance of the research, its managerial implications, and the scope for further studies.

Conflict of Interest

The author certifies that she has no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Funding Acknowledgement

The author received no financial support for this manuscript's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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