

# Examining gender dynamics of care work and violence in the IT industry

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# *Introduction*

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- This presentation will be about
  - Resistance of the IT industry.
  - **Contradictory** discourses within the IT industry.
  - The construct of mobility.
  - Importance of women's social roles.

# *Outline of the Research Study*

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- Women's experience in the IT industry
  - Three dimensions: the workplace, the home, and public space.
  - Analytical lens: **Social roles** of women.
  - Areas of inquiry: Carework and gender violence.

# *The context of the IT industry*

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- The discourses within the IT industry
  - Allows a space for women to partake of a new professional identity.
  - Flexible work hours, challenging and interesting work spaces, and meritocratic reward systems.
  - Image of **freedom**, modernity, economic and social mobility.

# *The realities of the IT industry*

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- The lived experiences of the IT industry
  - Job insecurity.
  - Individualised responsibility, eschewing collective bargaining.
  - Competition with fellow co-workers as an **organisational** strategy.
  - Reward mechanisms that rely on arbitrary appraisal criteria.

# *The gendered IT workspace*

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- Women's "place" in the IT industry
  - Unequal wages, contracts, bargaining power.
  - Under representation.
  - **Soft skills.**
  - Institutional frameworks coincide with marriage and motherhood.
  - Mobility and cultivation of social networks.

## *Interaction with family structures*

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- Women's "place" at home
  - Marriage as destiny.
  - Motherhood as a source of legitimacy.
  - Responsible for reciprocal kinship relationships.
  - **Keeping peace.**
  - Identity located within the household.

# Carework and the IT industry

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- Negotiating work and family
  - Blurring of work and non-work boundaries.
  - A good worker antithetical to a good wife.
  - Structural failures attributed to individual *inefficiencies*.
  - Negotiating powers limited by family burden.



# *Gender violence and the IT industry*

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- Individual ‘choice’ and structural transgressions
  - Social mores related to marital status, living arrangements, and choice of a job profile.
  - Reinstatement of regressive social practices like dowry affecting women’s social power.
  - **Continual contestation** of women’s position in the household, working hours, and shifting identities and priorities.

# *Methodology*

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- Conceptualising and reconceptualising approaches
  - Attempt 1: NASSCOM and direct contact with companies.
  - Attempt 2: NGOs, IT workers unions, and social networks.
  - Attempt 3: **Personal connections.**
- One ITeS company, along with assorted responses from individuals contacted through social media.

# *Impact of methodology*

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- The analyses have the following characteristics
  - Diversity of the sample geographically but not demographically.
  - Generalisability to the entire sample limited.
  - Context information **missing**.

# Results

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- Demographic profile
  - 65% female; **72% unmarried**; more than 50% have a at least a Bachelors' degree.
  - 40% live with their own parents; one-third live in nuclear families, and one-third live in joint families.
  - Primarily technical and support staff to IT companies.

# Results

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- The relationship with IT companies
  - Primary draw: salary.
    - Secondary draw for women: nature of work and flexibility of work.
    - Secondary draw for men: nature of work and relationship with supervisor.
  - 70% of all women in the survey think their company is **supportive** of gender issues.

# Results

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- A brief picture of unpaid carework
  - 30% of all women work about 2 to 4 hours, compared to 18% of all men.
  - 80% of all those who report doing **no domestic chores** are men.
  - 81% of all those who report working for 4 to 6 hours are women.

# *Results*

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- The larger story of unpaid carework
  - Time dimensions: Burden shifting to the weekend.
  - Family form: 40% of women report taking help from parents for child care, even in nuclear families.
  - Discourse: 65% of women do **not** feel that work life affects family life and vice versa.

# *Results*

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- A brief picture of gender violence
  - 40% of individuals endorse justifications of violence, *sometimes*.
  - Gender violence reported by **both** men and women.
  - A quarter of all women have experienced slapping by their friends and family.
  - 40% of women do not have access to their own income.



# Results

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- The larger story of gender violence
  - Gender balance: Demographics of sample affecting responses.
  - Life course: Married women and married men having different experiences compared to others.
  - Responsibility: Women who felt they were responsible for the violence didn't tell **anyone** about the violence.

# *Now what?*

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- Understanding **discrepancies**
  - Discourse of respectable modernity.
  - Construction of identity.
  - Invisibility of care work (even for women).
  - Discursive impact of the IT industry.

# *The way forward*

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- Theory and Practice
  - Engaging women to examine highly gendered mechanisms of exploitation.
  - Examining social roles in the context of a **discursive institutional practice**.
  - Creation of new ways of entering the field.

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Thank *you.*