

Title:

Women's work in digital economy: A study on gender dimensions of remote working in India's IT-ITES sector

Proposal Summary:

The COVID 19 pandemic has reshaped work and work-related policies almost universally and women have been facing unique and unequal impact as a result of these changes. 'Work from home' or remote working has been the norm for many organisations, particularly IT-ITES companies, since the beginning of the year 2020. Even prior to the pandemic, remote working options were available in many organizations, albeit underused. While it was mostly regarded as rendering workers unproductive, many recent studies have indicated quite the contrary. The rise in productivity and economic savings on account of giving up office spaces, regular commuting, etc. have now encouraged many IT-ITES companies to adopt remote working wherever feasible. IT-ITES is one of the sectors with a substantial gender gap and it is also the sector where remote working has expanded the most in the recent years. This study will therefore focus on the impact of remote working on women employees in the IT-ITES sector.

While there are many advantages to remote working, this paper hypothesizes that the existing legal and policy framework surrounding remote working is inadequate and needs to be amended in a gender sensitive manner. This would require a multi-stakeholder approach to be adopted by the State, businesses and employees. A gender responsive assessment of the issue and providing gender transformative remedies is crucial in enabling women as contributors in the digital economy. By studying and evaluating the gender dimensions of remote working in India within the IT-ITES industry, the proposed paper attempts to throw light on the impact of digitally enabled remote work on women. The paper aims to contribute towards the feminist discourse on ensuring decent work for women in the new digital economy.

Research Questions:

- What is the impact of remote working on women employees in the IT-ITES sector in India? To what extent does remote working affect some of the substantive elements of decent work?
- What can businesses as employers do to accommodate the needs of women employees working remotely?

- What role does the State play in ensuring employers adopt labour friendly and gender sensitive practices while working remotely?

This research paper seeks to produce the following outcomes:

- Collect gender segregated data on the impact of remote working in IT-ITES sector.
- Propose gender responsive recommendations on remote working policies for IT-ITES companies
- Evaluate the feasibility of adopting laws like right to disconnect in India and its impact on women employees
- Study the existing employment law framework with respect to discrimination, safety, etc. in India and evaluate its applicability in remote working. If there are shortcomings, propose changes wherever required.