CHAPTER 5
CAREER AND GENERATIONS

Examination of the existing literature, findings of the baseline study, and the researcher’s personal experiences in the field of HR suggested that, as found in the international literature, generations in India differed in terms of their career aspirations, success, goals, expectations, trajectories, etc. However, as no empirical study has explored career-related generational differences in the Indian context, the present study sought to do the same. This chapter presents the findings related to this aspect of the study, following which, the chapter is concluded by examining them in light of the existing literature.
Recent research in the field of careers from a generational perspective consistently suggests that, across generations, careers have become less stable and linear, and have steered towards more mobile and multidirectional paths for successive generations (Chudzikowski & Mayrhofer, 2011; Dries, Pepermans, & De Kerpel, 2008; Lyons, Schweitzer, Ng, & Kuron, 2012). However, it is unclear if this perspective is true for the Indian generations. The present study explores this aspect, and the related findings have been presented and discussed in this chapter. Here, basing herself in the tradition of organizational careers\(^1\), the researcher attempts to ascertain the causes of inter generational differences in organizational careers.

This chapter explores the following questions: “What is the definition of career and career success for different generations?” “Do generational participants have different subjective and objective criteria to define career success?” “How are career trajectories and mobility patterns different across generations?” “What are the career aspirations of generational participants?” and “What expectations do generational participants from organizations in managing their career?”

The results of the above themes form the first part of the chapter. The second part focuses on some over arching themes that appeared during the in-depth interviews, specifically, the importance of balancing career and other aspects of life, and career challenges for various generations. Throughout the chapter, the theme has been first illustrated using the verbatim quotes of some of the participants that represent each of the three generational groups, following by an explanation of the findings. The chapter ends with a discussion and analysis of the findings in light of the existing body of literature.

**What is Career?**

In a pioneering work on careers, Arthur, Hall and Lawrence (1989) looked at the definition of career from eleven different perspectives and proposed the following definition of career: “the evolving sequence of a person’s work experiences over time.” The authors observed that the themes of work and time are central to the definition of career. Work, according to them, meant ways in which we see and experience other people, the organization, and the society. On the other hand, time provides a moving

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\(^1\) Popular in schools of management, the concept of “Organizational Careers” focuses on understanding the relationship between the individual and the organization, and how individuals and organizations interact with one another over time (Arthur, 2008; Van Maanen, 1977).
perspective to the career definition. This definition proposed by Arthur and colleagues is used most frequently by all researchers today. Though a lot of research has focused on the definition of career (Gunz & Peiperl, 2008; Khapova, Arthur, & Wilderon, 2008), the concept continues to be an elusive one. In the current study, the researcher attempted to understand the meaning and definition of career from a generational perspective.

Bird (1994) argues that to understand career definitions, researchers should focus both on syntax and semantics of the definition. A syntactic definition concerns the interplay of positions and time, whereas a semantic definition focuses on the content and meaning of work experiences. Semantics becomes more crucial as it highlights the context in which meaning is created, since meaning is embedded in the context. The theme “what is career” for generational participants is understood in the semantic and syntactic sense, to get a deeper understanding of the effect of context on the generational participants. The meaning of career is influenced by individual experiences within organizations, and embedded in social and cultural context. The current research explores the subjective and objective meaning of career for the generational participants. Subjective careers are the individual’s own interpretations of his/her career situation at any given time, and objective careers are the parallel interpretations of any career provided by the society and its institutions (Barley, 1989).

**Young Generation**

*Career is something that gives me an independent existence and identity. It’s not a traditional source of income. I think there is a clear distinction in my mind about a career and a profession. A career is something that drives my energy towards something I believe in and something that challenges me, whereas a profession is a means to achieve livelihood, the salary making function of life. So in future, once I have paid for my education loan, I will save up for an entrepreneurial venture and become a blogger or a wedding planner or creative designer; something that helps me satisfy my creative urges. I believe career is not doing today what you were doing two years ago.* (Swadha, FMCG)

*To me it’s progression through different kinds of work, which is an extension of my personal identity. Something that is consciously planned or managed by me, since it reflects who I am. It helps me gain confidence and helps me grow as a person. It’s a means through which I trade my skills, talents, and passions, to earn money and create value for the organization and the society.* (Sonal, Banking)

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2 Syntax - the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language. Semantics- the meaning of the content.
For me the meaning of career has kept on evolving. I think it’s a means to achieve my potential through carefully chosen experiences and meaningful engagements sorted out of available opportunities. I think it’s an extension of one’s personality and an anticipated outcome of education, something which engages me holistically. I think that as a human being we have a lot of faculties. You are creative, you have intelligence, and you have aspirations. So a career should be able to engage all those faculties. (Anwesha, e-Commerce)

**Middle Generation**

For me career is like a ladder of learning experiences, the higher you go on the ladder, the more learning experience one gets. Let me explain. When I graduated from an engineering college, there were not many job opportunities available for young pass outs. You needed a recommendation letter from some senior person to be recruited in a good company. I didn’t have that recommendation letter and hence I went abroad to do my Masters. After my Masters, I worked abroad in different organizations for ten years. Then the organization with whom I was working was starting their India office and they asked me if I would like to relocate and I happily agreed. It was the early part of 2000 and a lot of positive growth was happening in the country post liberalization. With the skill set I have, I started getting offers from different organizations and I kept moving from company to company, gaining experience and expertise in my field. All these organizations have immensely add to my learning experience and kept on promoting me from designation to designation. (Suri, IT consulting)

I think, for my generation, career is all about getting the satisfaction of working in jobs that one is passionate about, because there were times when I was very frustrated, just the passion for what I am doing made me survive and made me resilient to stick there. Secondly, making a make a name for yourself, don’t die the life of an insect. Be a synonym for the field of your work. I have to be known for my work. I am known as a Nestle expert. They call me by the product launches that I have done. Career for me is the jobs or experiences that I do to get job satisfaction and name for my own self. (Michael, Construction)

Over a period, the definition of career has changed for me. From a job perspective, it is now about gainful experiences. Let me explain. My father is a doctor, he didn’t like being a doctor, but he still kept on doing the same thing throughout his life. The senior generation were married to their work whether they liked it or not. For me it’s different. I graduated as a Masters in Human Resources and started working as a management trainee. Over a period, I have jumped between companies and come to the conclusion that my loyalty is towards my own career, the meaning I derive out of it, and the satisfaction I get from doing the things I want to do. Hence, it is not about jobs or designation, but is about meaningful experiences of doing things I enjoy. (Rekha, Banking)

**Senior Generation**

In our days, we didn’t think about career, the first important target was to get a job and start supporting the family. I was a Bachelor of Science; I gave the examination of a probationary officer in the bank, and started working as a banker. Hence, there was no link between my education and what I was doing, but it was important to work in the bank because it provided good salary, good status of working in a “Sarkari” job and your life was settled for once and for all. So
unlike today, one did not think about creating a career, it was something that the organization gave you and you do not make a fuss about it. You keep on moving between jobs and designations. Keep on doing work that has been given to you and keep on getting promoted from designation to designation. (Aakash, Banking)

Career should provide for a good life. It should provide for good jobs which has a variety in function. Career is a constant process of change and enhancement of experiences. Change and experience are interrelated because previous experience helps you in making change fruitful. (Gopal, Pharmaceuticals)

I was preparing for the IAS examination and when I didn’t get selected, I wrote a lot of entrance examinations for Government jobs because I wanted to support my family. Frankly, career was not even a question in my mind, it was getting a job to support my family. Today when I think about career I think of two important things, firstly doing something which I find meaningful, for me that joy is important. Secondly, a certain minimum level of financial security is another thing a career should afford. (Arun, Oil and Natural Gas)

Earlier research has looked at career as an overarching construct that creates a canopy of meanings (Young & Valach, 1996). In congruence with that, in the current study, different generational participants were found to attach different meanings to the construct of careers.

The three generational groups defined careers differently. For the Young generation it is an extension of an individual’s personality and identity, which is consciously managed by choosing meaningful engagements that help in achieving one’s individual potential. For the Middle generation it is a ladder of learning experiences, and for the Senior generation it is a ladder of succession of jobs and designations that brings in constant change and enhancement provided by the organization.

The career definition for the Senior generation is in congruence with the traditional definition of career, as proposed by Wilensky (1961). He referred to career as a succession of related jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige, through which persons move in an ordered (more-or-less predictable) sequence. Arthur, Hall, and Lawrence (1989) noted that careers reflect the relationship between people and institutions that are the providers of official positions. Hence, the study of careers is a study of individuals, institutions, and social change. Further, the late 80’s saw a transition from jobs to experiences in the career literature (Savickas, 1997). This shift is also evident in the current study, where the Senior generation defines career as movements between jobs, and the Middle generation expatiates it as a movement between experiences. Narratives from the Middle generation place importance on learning. Though the element of learning, knowledge, and information are missing from
the traditional definitions of career, in a later reconceptualization of career, Allan Bird (1994) formulated a career definition based on knowledge and information. According to Bird, careers are accumulations of information and knowledge embodied in skills, experience, and relationship network acquired through an evolving sequence of work experience over time. Further, from a social learning theory perspective (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990) learning from past experiences in the social world is considered to influence future career choices of the middle generation. The career definition of the Young generation finds semblance with Hall’s (2002) definition of “protean careers.” According to Hall, protean careers are managed by individuals, and not organizations. Further, these careers are managed by making career choices which answers “one’s true calling” or which assists in a person’s search for self-fulfillment (p. 169). Though literature is scant on career as an extension of one’s identity, Hall reports that an individual’s personal identity has many sub identities, and career identities are one such sub identity. These career identities assist individuals in making career choices, which assist in self-fulfilment (Hall, 1996).

There are always two sides to a career; a publicly observable (or objective) side, and an intrinsic (or subjective) side (Khapova, Arthur, & Wilderon, 2008). This duality in constructing the meaning of career is also observed in the current study. For the Young generation, the subjective career is a means to find work that satisfies individual creative urges and passions, whereas the objective career helps in gaining financial stability and creating value for the organization and the society. For the Middle generation, the subjective meaning of career is achieved through the satisfaction gained by working in meaningful assignments, and the objective meaning is shaped by creating a brand name for oneself through ones work. The Senior generation objectively posits career as a means to achieve jobs, promotion, and financial stability. Interestingly, the Senior generation does not insist on a strong subjective meaning of career. Khapova, et al. (2008) also observed that, as the world moves from industrial economy towards a knowledge economy, subjective careers become more important as compared to objective careers. This analysis holds true in the present study too. While the objective career is always asserted through limited ways for example position, promotion, financial reward, and stability, the subjective career is multi dimensional, for example, pursuing a professional calling, accumulating new learning’s, and work life balance, among others Hall (2002).
Respondents from all generations agreed that the definition and meaning of career has changed and evolved. Dries, Pepermans, and DeKerpel (2008) also observed that the very nature of careers is susceptible to change, since careers are enacted within an ever-changing social, economic, and occupational environment. For Young generation, this definition changes once an individual starts working, for the middle generation, exposure to different occupational settings brings in the change, and for the Senior generation, the changes in the social and economic environment has brought in changes in the meaning and definition of career.

Career Trajectories and Mobility

Career mobility could be defined as job changes that incorporates changes in work responsibilities, hierarchical level, or designation within an organization, or organization changes incorporating changes in employer and occupational changes, i.e., changes that require fundamentally new skills, routines, work environments, training, education, or vocational preparation (Feldman & Ng, 2007). Mobility has also been studied n terms of status changes in job (i.e., upward, downward, or lateral), especially in terms of title, esteem, responsibility, and reward (Ng, Sorensen, Eby, & Feldman, 2007). Career mobility has become a new norm (Inkson, Gunz, Ganesh, & Roper, 2012) due to a social shift from traditional linear career patterns to modern careers, requiring people to change roles, jobs, and organizations frequently during their careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Baruch, 2006). Moses (1997) calls it a “chutes and ladders” model involving a mixture of upward, lateral, and downward moves, involving numerous changes of occupation. Recent work in different countries (Becton, Walker, & Jones-Farmer, 2014; Chudzikowski, 2012; Lyons, Schweitzer, Ng, & Kuron, 2012; Lyons, Schweitzer, & Ng, 2015) focusing on generational differences in career mobility patterns found that Millennials have the highest rate of job mobility, followed by Gen X and Baby Boomers. Changes in life style, expectations of pay, promotion, status, and an ever-growing job market have been the predominant reasons for this mobility. This theme elaborates if we facing an intergenerational shift in career patterns. Career trajectories have been used as a lens to understand career mobility patterns across generations.

Based on status and employer mobility, later researchers have formulated six different types of mobility i.e., internal-upward, external-upward, internal-lateral, external-lateral, internal-downward and external-downward (Ng, et al., 2007)
Young Generation

I did my MBBS but didn’t want to pursue a career as a doctor, hence completed my masters with Human Resources as a specialization. My college placed me in a power and steel company in line HR. I didn’t like the slow paced work of the company; hence, after one and a half years I switched to a mobile application design company. I got a pay rise and a designation rise too. Incidentally, after joining the company, I realized that the work in that company was not too structured, so though the role that they had offered to me was bigger, I was still doing the same thing that I was doing in the earlier organization. Hence, within six months I floated my CV in the market again. A year and two months later I join my present company. It’s one of the best consulting organization in the world. Though I took a horizontal movement from role perspective, I still got a good deal in terms of salary. I think there are two ways of growing. One is where you stay with the same company and grow, which takes a long time and the other is you keep on moving and learn and grow along the way. (Yadugirish, Consulting)

I passed out of engineering and started working for India’s biggest IT Company. Working in the IT Company was stopgap for me. The work experience enhanced my CV. After working there for one year, I cleared my CAT examination and went to study in one of the best MBA colleges of India. I got placed in an MNC through campus placements. The role the company had given to me was great, I was placed in the SAP team, the work was great and my boss was a very cool person. After working there for 2.5 years, I started looking for other jobs in the market. See, in my generation, if you don’t change job after two years, people start asking you questions. Why are you not moving? What’s the problem with you? Its becomes a matter of peer pressure to change jobs as if by not changing the job I become some type of outlier. People perceive that if you are moving you are in demand. Secondly, if you work with the same company your pay growth will be stunted, and you will remain behind your peers in pay comparison. Hence, I changed my job and moved to this current company where I am working for past one year. (Himanshu, Operational Consulting)

After passing out of NIFT, I have changed four jobs in six years. I wanted to experience the various domains under fashion merchandising. I have worked with an export company in merchandising, then I worked for this big brand to understand how they create different lines of fashion like fall and winter lines. Then I worked for a big designer who has his own line of high-end clothing boutiques. Now I am working as a store in charge with this international brand. I think, before one commits to what one wants to do with a career, it’s better to get a feel of everything that is there in the market, because once I get married and settled I will not be able to change my jobs so frequently. (Gayatri, Fashion Consultant)

Middle Generation

After completing my Masters in Sales and Marketing, I joined a multinational FMCG beverage company. The experience was good, and it is said that in the sales line, if you start your career in a FMCG company, you career is set for life. After getting two promotions and a great learning exposure, it was time for me to move on, hence after competing 4 years with them, I moved into an Indian telecom company. At that point, the Indian telecom sector was booming and I was getting a good pay increase, so I moved on. I worked there for two years and got one
promotion there, but I was missing the MNC culture because Indian companies do not deal with employees in the same way MNC’s do. The learning experience is great in MNC’s. I joined the loans division of a bank. In hindsight, this was a mistake because I did not enjoy working in a bank. Incidentally, my immediate supervisor from the earlier telecom company was moving to an international telecom company, which was a late entrant in the Indian market. He called me to join him and I did. So, I left the bank in just four months. I was with this international telecom company for five years, got three promotions, but later on started feeling stagnated. Hence, I moved to another Indian telecom company. This was a horizontal growth for me. There I worked for one year. I am working for the current company since the last three years. Again, it is a sector change, but I was a sales guy, and I will always remain a sales guy. I have left and joined companies that offer me the sales aggression. (Manoj, Telecom)

After completing my Masters in Agriculture Economics, I joined a multinational pharmacy company. I worked with them for 9 years. They were the best in the industry, and hence I joined them. I got multiple promotions in the company and had a great learning exposure. They groomed me as a sales product specialist. I think that one must change jobs only when you are highly dissatisfied with your job. I didn’t find any reason for dissatisfaction; hence, I continued with them for nine years. A global pharma company offered me a bigger role and a very high pay increase, and I joined them. I worked with them for five and half years. After that, they asked me to relocate to Malaysia, which I didn’t want to do. Hence, I joined an upcoming Indian company. Though it was a vertical move for me, and the pay was very good, I started facing difficulties from day one. I didn’t like the culture of the company, and hence after working with them for just six months, I contacted my earlier company, and they welcomed me with open arms. I have come and joined them back, and have now completed five years with them. They gave me a horizontal shift from a role perspective, but gave me two things that are important to me right now. They gave me Mumbai as a location, and increase in pay too. (Prasanna, Healthcare Pharmaceutical)

**Senior Generation**

I joined this company as a Graduate Engineering Trainee in 1976. In the private sector, this was and still is one of the best engineering companies. I have never worked in any other company, and the experience of working in this company has been great. In the past 30 years, I have been promoted several times, and also got exposure of various verticals like manufacturing, supply chain, engineering procurement, fabrication, business development, and vendor management among others. The organization gave me exposure to various functional as well as business exposures through vertical and horizontal movements. Today I am the CEO of a midsized fans and air preheating company, and the various stints that I have done in this company come in very handy for the role of a CEO. In my generation, people used to be married to their jobs and companies, which is true for me too. (Vijay, Engineering)

I started my career with a public sector insurance company, which gave me various interesting experiences. The organization had a policy of transferring you every two to three years, to give direct exposure to various things, so that when we reach the top, we have an understanding of everything. They kept on rotating me to various departments and verticals for 20 years. I was in the branch administration, computers, publicity, housing finance, sales marketing, and international exposure, which included five years in the Fiji islands, and finally I was made the divisional
In concurrence with earlier studies, the current study also found increased job and organizational mobility among generations. This mobility of generational participants could be understood with the help of the factors proposed by Ng, et al. (2007). They posited that reasons for job mobility could be predicted and understood by three factors:

- Structural factors, which include economic conditions, societal conditions, industry differences, and organizational staffing policies.
- Individual factors, which include personality, career interests, values, and attachment styles.
- Decisional factors, which include subjective norms, desirability of mobility, and readiness for change.

The senior generation respondents from the study reported to have worked with a single or a maximum of two organizations for their entire life. During their tenure, they reported to have internal upward and internal lateral career movement. Respondents also elaborated on cross-functional mobility, which helped in developing general management skills. These mobility patterns reflect a “Job in Job” phenomenon, where one gets various kinds of exposures within the same company, and greater job mobility does not bring in higher turnover (Lyons, Schweitzer, & Ng, 2015). In a study conducted on on Australian public sector employees, McDonald, Brown, and Bradley (2005) also found that employees of public sector organizations still preferred the traditional career model based on continuity and length of service in a single organization. Further, the respondents cited an extreme sense of organizational commitment and attachment, and equated it to the relationship of marriage. Some
respondents from public sector organizations have used this rich skill repository to move into private sector organizations during periods of economic boom, proving Ng, Sorensen, Eby, & Feldman’s (2007) model of mobility due to robust economic conditions.

The respondents of the Middle generation had an average of four to five job changes in their careers. They had internal upward, internal lateral, external upward, and external lateral mobility patterns in their career, which have been accompanied with an increase in designation, role, and pay. Research posits the growth of free agents who adopt a self directed approach towards careers and engage in mobility to improve their career capital, to take advantage of the development opportunities available in the market is on the rise (Hall & Mirvis, 1996). The middle generation respondent’s behavior of free agents could help them in enhancing their employability and managing secure employments.

In congruence with earlier research (e.g., Lyons, Schweitzer, Ng, & Kuron, 2012; Lyons, Schweitzer, & Ng, 2015), Young generation employees were found to have a much higher rate of job and employer change. They have managed internal upward, internal lateral, external upward, and external lateral mobility patterns, which have mostly been coupled with pay and designation hikes. Young generation respondents quoted various reasons for job changes, one of them being to keep pace with market trends of salary increase. According to a recent report by the Forbes magazine (Keng, 2014), employees who stayed with the same organization for more than two years, on an average, earned 50% lesser salary over their lifetime. The rationale behind the statistics is that the increments in salary that an employee gets every year are lesser than what the employee could negotiate for a new role in a new organization. The other reason for mobility quoted was to enhance the chances of growth. Strong economic growth patterns have increased job opportunities for a younger workforce, which has increased the mobility options for the Young generation. Larson, Rottinghaus, & Borgen (2002) considered this as openness to experience, which pushes the Young generation workers to look for new experiences of growth. Further, as the Young generation takes a longer time to finish their education and settle down into their career, it may also be true that we have entered an era of prolonged career exploration and establishment, which is broken by intermittent educational breaks, and where the youth delays their entry into roles and responsibilities. Such a phenomenon has been termed as “emerging adulthood” by Arnett (2004). Further,
mobility due to peer pressure could be understood from the subjective norms of Ng, Sorensen, Eby, & Feldman (2007). The Young generation today faces peer pressure for changing jobs since it has now become a norm to change jobs every two years. This pressure affects the subjective behavior of individuals, and they become comfortable in pursuing opportunities for which they might have been unsure since it is pursued by peers. Thus, we are witnessing a societal shift, which is not just affecting organizational life, but has ramifications on social life. One such aspect was beautifully phrased by one of the Young generation respondents. According to him,

When I tell my dad that I am changing my job, he gets very upset and tells me that in his time they were married to a single company and never thought of leaving the company. On this I always tell my appa (father) that in my generation, before you marry someone, you date a lot of other people to find out who is the right person for you. Similarly, I will work in many companies before I find the right one for me. (Yadugirish, Consulting)

**Career Success**

Individual career success holds great influence over organizational success (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999); hence, organizational career scholars have extensively studied the construct of career success and factors facilitating individual and organizational success (Boudreau, Boswell, & Judge, 2001; Judge & Bretz, 1994; Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bertz (1995) defined career success as the positive psychological or work related outcomes or achievements one has accumulated because of one’s work experience. Building on earlier constructs, Arthur, Khapova, and Wilderom (2005) defined career success as the accomplishment of desirable work related outcomes at any point in a person’s work experience over time.

Career success has been viewed in two distinct ways. Subjective career success could be understood as individual’s internal apprehension and evaluation of career, based on dimensions important to the individual. On the other hand, objective career success may be defined as an external perspective that delineates more or less tangible indicators of an individual’s career situation (van Maanen, 1977). Functional level, pay, number of promotions, promotion speed, job level, and other such tangible indicators are described as markers of objective career success, whereas work-life balance, career enjoyment, career satisfaction, and career fulfilment are markers of subjective career success (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Gunz & Heslin, 2005; Heslin, 2005; Ng,
Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). Researches posit that both objective and subjective success factors are interdependent; hence, influence each other over time.

Though the age of the individual is an important criterion for understanding the definition of career success definition, and criteria for the same (Super, D. E., Savickar, & Super, 1996), career success from a generational perspective has received little attention in the research arena. Dries, Pepermans, & De Kerpel, (2008) found that satisfaction comes out as being the overriding criteria by which people evaluate others’ career success. Parry, Unite, Chudzikowski, Briscoe, and Shen’s (2012) study on Millennials’ career success criteria across four different countries found achievement in various dimensions of financial security, role, and promotion as important to Millennials. This theme is an endeavor to understand career success from a multigenerational perspective.

**Young Generation**

I want to be that person who goes to international holidays every year with family, buys a new sports car every two years, has the best new gadgets. Basically, I want to be the first person in my batch to upload pictures of these happenings of my life on Facebook. I want to be that person who people aspire to be. That, for me, is career success. (Nisha, Insurance)

Career success is the kind of money one can demand from the market. I might get an X amount of money after working for a few years, but when you are a high performer, you get to that level much faster than the others do. Whether one likes it or not, it’s a competitive race that one is running, with so many known and unknown competitors. So if I am able to get that pay, position, and learning opportunity much before others get it, then it is career success for me. (Tarun, Manufacturing)

In a competitive market like today’s, when you are able to make your own career decisions rather than being driven by market forces, it is career success. If after five years, I want a particular role and it is offered to me rather than me running after it, rather, the organization is keen on having me do it, this is career success for me. It means that the expectations that I have for myself get validated. I want to achieve, and achieve at any cost. (Anuya, Manufacturing)

**Middle Generation**

Designations across organizations have become so dubious that they cannot actually be used as a reference of success. After sixteen years of work, I am still a deputy general manager, whereas some banks are giving assistant vice president designation to people with four years of work experience. Hence, to my mind career success lies in two important things. Firstly what competencies one has gained and what learning opportunities one has achieved. Secondly, what kind of jobs are available for a person with the set of skills and experience. Normally, I
don’t change jobs frequently, but I keep on getting job offers from different companies, and that’s quite a humbling experience. (Arvind, Manufacturing)

Career success is personal and professional growth for me. At the end of the day, one has to get recognized financially and role wise within the organization, but what matters most is how satisfied I am with what I am doing. Am I able to challenge myself intellectually with the work I do? Do people remember me for the work I have done? Have I been able to impact people’s lives or completed an excel sheet of roles and expectations? (Swami, FMCG)

For me career success would be providing opportunities for my son, which my dad couldn’t afford for me. I still remember that I wanted to pursue my graduation in an international college and I couldn’t do so because we were four siblings, and with the limited salary that my dad had, he couldn’t afford international education for his son. I want to be that father who never says no to his son, of course for the rightful demands. (Vikrant, Operations Research)

Senior Generation

According to the world, career success means a big house, designation, bank balance, and such other things. But in my opinion career success should be all about what one has become. I have become a far more creative, constructive and contributing individual. I have touched several lives at varying degrees of transformation and helped them transform. That’s rewarding and satisfying for me. The meaning of career success has kept on changing for me and personally I think the meaning keeps getting evolved based on what the market has to offer me. It keeps on setting newer benchmarks each day. Today, success for me is the successful HR interventions that I have implemented for my organization. As a head of human resources, the leadership talent that I have developed for my organization is success for me, the people that I have mentored is success for me, how enabled my organization is success for me. People make a lot of fuss about HR heads becoming CEO’s and why HR heads should and should not become CEO’s. To my mind the question is not if I become a CEO, but how successful do I make my CEO by the work I do in the organization and that’s true career success for me. (Kumar, Consulting)

Career success for me is the number of people that know me for the work that I have done and the illustrious career that I have. I get invited to speak at conferences and lectures at various platforms, where people are keen in knowing my point of view, which I have developed through meticulous learning and risk taking. To me, that’s career success in a true sense. When you come to a position where you could influence the fate of organizations and individuals, that’s the true mark of career success for me! (Ajay, Paint Company)

The current study found considerable variance in the way generations viewed their career success. The respondents quoted a mix of objective and subjective criteria in defining career success. Using objective criteria to define career success, the Young generation defined it in terms of designations they achieve, higher salary, and job opportunities in reputed organizations among others. Achievement is central to all discussions of career success for the Young generation. This achievement was elaborated in terms of material and symbolic things from one’s career. Organizational
position, advancement, and receiving better position along with financial stability were central to the discussion on career success. The Middle generation stressed on subjective criteria of being satisfied with what one is doing as crucial. They laid importance on meaningful work and a sense of accomplishment through helping others, mentoring others, continuously learning, and challenging one’s self as crucial to career success. The Senior generation defined it in subjective terms as being respected by other professionals and peers, transforming lives of individuals and the organization, influencing organizational profitability, and adulation for achievements from significant others as key to career success. Struges’s (1999) calls the young managers between the age range of 20 and 30 years as “Climbers,” who are keen on receiving promotion and pay increases, and older managers in their 40’s, who are keen on influencing others and the organization. Therefore, he rightly calls them “Influencers.” In addition, Zabusky and Barley (1996) proposed that with the flattening of organizational hierarchies and dubious job titles in vogue, individual career and career success should be viewed as “careers of achievement,” focusing on skills and achievement, rather than on “careers of advancement,” in terms of hierarchical progression.

External marketability is an expression of human capital for professional workers. This human capital can be leveraged within the organization to gain promotions, and externally for gaining better employment. Hence, it is recognized as an antecedent of subjective career success (Haines, Hamouche, & Saba, 2014). In the current study, the Middle generation participants viewed external marketability as a sign of career success; hence, proving that perceived external marketability is positively associated with subjective career success.

The literature on modern careers i.e., boundaryless and protean careers propagate the importance of internal sources of fulfillment via learning and development, through different types of job assignments and non-work related activities, as central to career success (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). Contrary to this view on career, the current study found that salary, which is the most traditional objective success criterion, was identified as important for all generations. According to participants from the Middle and Senior generations, salary should be commensurate with the skills and competencies of a person and help in achieving personal goals, whereas for the Young generation salary is a differentiator between good and average performers, and is a very important success evaluation criterion. Similarly, according to a few recent studies, not just salary, but instant bonuses and various status defining
perks like club memberships and executive parking, among others, is very crucial for the Gen Y (Dries, Pepermans, & De Kerpel, 2008; Hurst & Good, 2009; Parry, et al., 2012).

The middle and senior generation participants of the study acknowledged that the definition and nature of career success has evolved and changed over time. They reflected that once they achieved a particular goal, they did not stop looking ahead; rather, they described it as a journey of ever evolving achievements that are revised to match opportunities, self expectations, and circumstances. In a qualitative study conducted to understand Gen X and Gen Y’s career success definitions, McDonald and Hite (2008) observed that career success is an open ended and a fluid concept. Over a period, employees developed a strong sense of self worth and efficacy, and stressed the importance of meaningful work over hierarchical promotions and status.

Individuals evaluate their career success relative to their self set standards and aspirations, but also compare themselves with significant others. In a study on self and other referent criteria of career success evaluation, Heslin (2003) found that participants used both self referent and other referent criteria in determining career success and more than two thirds of the study participants used other referent criteria in determining their subjective success. Participants from the current study were also found to use self referent and other referent criteria of evaluating career success. The Young generation evaluates objective career success (salary, promotion, and role) through other referent criteria, such as in comparison with batch peers, friends, and past colleagues. The availability of social network tools assists them in making such comparisons. The Middle generation consciously refers to self and other referent criteria to measure subjective career success (personal growth, learning, creating an identity, and providing for the family); whereas, the Senior generation participants used both self and other referent criteria of evaluating subjective and objective career success (prestige, affirmation of others, designation, and satisfaction).

The social comparison theory proposed by Festinger (1954) states that people compare and evaluate their actions and outcomes with those of other people; hence, social comparison is an acceptable norm in modern day organizations. In a qualitative study, Struge (1999) found that managers conceptualized career success by utilizing two mechanisms, i.e., through feelings of personal accomplishment and enjoyment, and through approval and affirmation of others. Further, Abele and Wiese (2008) conducted a large study on 1185 managers and found that individuals who pursue self
management of their careers, rely more on other referent criteria for evaluating subjective career success through the utilization of factual information. The Young generation participants, who believe in setting their own career goals and objectives, rely heavily on other referent criteria to evaluate their career success, in comparison to the other two groups. This also explains the Senior generation’s need for affirmation of achievement through other referent criteria of evaluating subjective success where they utilize comparative judgment to evaluate their own success with their peers, based on markers like acceptance of leadership position and impactful decisions, among others.

**Career Aspirations**

Career aspiration has been the focus of many contemporary studies (Behrstock-Sherratt & Coggshall, 2010; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Dries Pepermans, & De Kerpel, 2008; Hurst & Good 2009; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2015). This theme aims to understand the career aspirations of generational participants.

**Young Generation**

*I graduated from a B-school with sales as my specialization, but I don’t see myself doing the same thing twenty years from now. I aspire to explore different contours of business. I will work in the sales line for the next three to five years and then move into something different.* (Gaurav, FMCG)

*My aspiration currently is to get as much learning as possible, go into the depth of my own specialization, and become subject matter expert through education or research. There is so much to achieve and there is so little time to do it all. I want to do everything in life, have an intellectually challenging job in a bigger brand company, an exciting social life, run the Mumbai marathon, go visit various places in the world and earn a ton of money to start my own venture at the age of 35 years.* (Anwesha, e-Commerce)

**Middle Generation**

*It is very important to continuously redefine one’s career. I have personally done this by consciously making choices, which others won’t do. There is a constant fear of becoming obsolete with regard to skills and competencies and the age old Peter Principle that “people rise or get promoted to the level of incompetence” starts getting applied. One has to be on a continuous look out for opportunities for learning, skill enhancement, role changes, and such others, within and outside the organization.* (Kiran, Power)

*I would like to get exposure in various verticals of the organization. Financially, I am still unsettled and hence my first target is to get settled financially and then in the coming ten years I aspire to head my vertical and create a brand image for myself in the industry.* (Vikrant, Operations Research)
Senior Generation

I have been the head of HR for the past ten years in various big and small organizations. The only thing now remaining is an international stint. I wish to keep working till I turn 75 years old. After that, I will seek retirement. (Ashish, FMCG)

Growing up in a pampered childhood of nuclear families, the Young generation has a sense of immediacy about their aspirations (Chhabra, 2014). The participants of the current study were very optimistic out their careers and aspired either to change their careers in the next five years, or achieve a leadership position within a dream organization. In a large study on 5000 young people across India, DeSouza, Kumar and Shastri (2009) found that 84% of the respondents were optimistic about their future. Another recent study by Deloitte India revealed that 80% of the respondents aspired to become leaders in the coming ten years in their current or other organizations (Bhattacharya, 2015). Research participants were confident and competitive, eager to achieve more than their parents, and make a big name for themselves in the corporate domain. Most of them shared that they have short term career plans and have not thought of anything beyond the age of 35 years. They fix achievement milestones at three or six months, and use learning as a driver for growth. Another key finding was the aspiration to get involved in intellectually creative and challenging work assignments. In a qualitative study on Millennial’s Kultalahti & Viitala (2015) found that repetitive tasks cause boredom, whereas intellectually challenging jobs have a positive impact on their motivation and intention to stay within the organization. Thus, their aspirations are mix of personal and professional goals. A recent study by Cisco (2012) revealed that it was a time for the Gen Y to be elastic, as they have no clear distinction between work and personal time.

While the Senior generation aspires to work more and aim for international stints, the Middle generation aspires to enhance learning through skill development and create a brand for oneself. The protean career theory focuses on self directed learning behavior as a career priority (Briscoe, Hall, & Demuth, 2006). Balancing work obligations with benefits to safeguard continuous employment along with freedom and opportunity to grow at work are the core preferences of a protean career path (Hall, 2004). Further, creating an individual brand value helps in external marketability of individuals, which further conjures a protean view of career. This view seems to be in conjunction to the current trends in the participants’ career aspirations.
Expectations Regarding Career Management Interventions from the Organization

Career management and planning is a comprehensive approach to all the activities and techniques facilitated by the organization, which are of concern with the career development of its employees (Baruch, 1996). The definition focuses on two crucial aspects i.e., planning and preparing for the future and secondly management, which involves operationalizing activities planned from the organization’s point of view. Earlier studies have looked at career management and planning from an organizational perspective, thereby studying the impact of career management strategies on shaping individuals’ careers within organizations (Baruch, 2003; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003). In the later 2000s, practitioners’ focus shifted to attracting and retaining the right talent through appropriate career management interventions, and thus started the need to explore the right career management interventions to support the career development and growth of employees (Crawshaw, 2006). Earlier studies on career management for generational participants have found that the Gen Y wants more individualized learning and development opportunities, which includes global assignments and sabbaticals from organizations (Weyland, 2011); whereas the Gen X, who are at the crossroads of their career, need career coaching support for moving ahead (Erickson, 2011). Studies have also found that Baby boomers need training and career paths to manage their career post retirement, along with supportive HRM practices like work life balance and knowledge sharing (Armstrong-Stassen 2005; Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009; Bertolino, Truxillo, & Fraccaroli, 2011). Through this theme, the researcher explores the generational participants’ expectations regarding career management interventions.

Young Generation

When I joined this IT Company, I saw that there was a huge difference between my salary and that given to people joining from premier business schools, though we were in the same management trainee program. I reported this to my manager and he told me that show good performance in a year and we will do the correction. For a year I worked like crazy and got the best performance rating. I went back to my manager for discussing my salary issue and he said that he couldn’t do anything since my college was ranked lower in the campus recruitment rating system. For six months I went to different seniors with my case and heard the same excuse that they can’t do anything, its organizational policy and the same nonsense again and again. I got frustrated and found a job in a consulting organization which gave me the desired package. When I put in my papers I suddenly started getting calls from all those senior people that why I didn’t go to them with my
issues, and that they want to retain me by giving me a salary hike. I don’t understand why couldn’t they do this when I went to them? This is strange that you don’t care for people when they are with you, but the moment they put in their papers they become important to you. (Manoj, ITES)

I joined this organization as a graduate administrative trainee after my graduation in Economics. The assessment centre report pointed out that I am a good fit at sales and marketing, whereas I wanted to pursue a career in finance. The HR counseled me that I would do great as a sales guy. After working for two years as a sales representative I feel lost and confused because I still feel that I would have done better as a finance person. I feel that the organization should provide career support in various formats. Firstly, my immediate supervisor should spend enough time with me, coaching me on my performance, and providing constructive feedback on my areas of strengths and weaknesses. Along with this, he should provide career coaching and guidance from time to time, which will help me be on target with my goals. Secondly, my organization has different management trainee programs which lead to different careers, but there is no clarity on various careers available in the organization. Hence, once I complete my three years in this GAT program, I don’t know where my career is going to go, there is absolutely no clarity on that. Lastly, the organization provided us with a one year MBA program designed and delivered by faculties of IIMA. I have completed the program but there is no provision of any certification of that MBA. Now such a program is useless for me if I can’t put it on my CV. (Mukharjee, FMCG)

Career management practices of organizations should not be following a one size fits all approach. People who work better should be given opportunities of faster promotions, developmental opportunities, flexibility at work, or maybe even a four day working week. I think spending one performance cycle in one role is enough to learn about the role. I want to get learning opportunities through various work assignments, projects and learning sessions from senior mentors. (Kartik, e-Commerce)

There is no clarity on career path in this organization and no one who can guide you on what to expect with regard to career from the organization. Just having a great brand name does not work, organizations need to have clear and differentiated career track too, which should resonate with the career aspirations of employees. My organization is a new e-commerce set up where the business reality is changing on a daily basis. We don’t even have a clear role defined. Hence, I don’t know what I have to do and on what aspects I will be evaluated. In this scenario, asking for a career management policy is asking for too much. (Aditi, Retail)

Middle Generation

My grandfather brought a house when he was 65 years old, my father brought it when he was 45 years old, and I have brought it at the age of 25 years, because I was very conscious of my future and my earning. A large part of my salary goes in paying the EMI 4 for the house. Right now I want my organization to give me those career moves which help me in lessening my burden of this EMI. I have requested my manager to give me an international stint because the savings abroad are good.

4 EMI- Equated monthly installment
If not that, then I have requested my manager to give me a promotion and a salary hike to support me. (Rahul, Pharmaceuticals)

I, along with 20 other people, was recruited as a part of middle level leadership development intervention by my organization. We went through extensive leadership development program in the first year, by the end of which we were supposed to be placed as leaders in mid-sized organizations. By the end of the year we come to know that the head of HR has changed, and the new guy is changing all the earlier programs and policies. He also changed the direction of our program and we were put in normal mundane roles. I think the first and the most important thing that organizations should develop is sustainability of career management practices. Without this, all the money spent on any intervention is futile. (Ranvir, Manufacturing)

I need exposure in different vertical through mobility. I think this will help me in developing my skills. Secondly, I believe there is no transparency in selecting people for promotion. Senior management will randomly pick a person, say Suraj, based on Suraj’s equation with the seniors. Now they would do reverse engineering and try to find all means of justifying Suraj’s promotion, be it assessment centers or performance reports. This acts as negative motivator for people like me, who do not believe in managing seniors for career advancement. Hence, for what it’s worth, career management practices should be transparent to all. Secondly, most of the career management interventions are for the top talent of the organization, and common employees who put their sweat and blood for the company have nothing. (Saptarishi, Retail)

I need someone senior to mentor me on how to move ahead in my career. I also wish that this person sponsors my case in the right forums so that my talent gets noticed in the organization. (Anju, Banking)

Senior Generation

I want to note two important things. Firstly, I think it’s time that we bring in changes in our retirement policies. In India, we retire people at the youngest as compared to other countries, and because of this we are looking a huge talent loss. My organization is a 150 year old organization, which recruited people in batches and in the mid 90’s and early 2000, after which we stopped recruitment because of business reasons. Now what’s happening is every year people who joined in 50’s and 60’s are retiring, and we don’t have enough people to occupy leadership roles, because we stopped recruitment in between. This situation could have been saved if we increased the retirement age to may be 65 or 67years. I would personally like to work more. I don’t feel tired right now and feel fit and rejuvenated as compared to the younger lot. I can work more hours than them, without the disturbance of Facebook and Whatsapp, and bring in more productivity to the organization. Secondly, I think my generation has seen so much change happening in business that we have become repositories of knowledge, which will go out of the organization with us. Organizations should invest in stronger knowledge management interventions to preserve this knowledge. (Arun, Oil and Natural Gas)

I need the organization to invest in career development interventions for me like sending me for international training program. This would give me new learning exposure and sharpen my leadership skills. A lot of organizations invest in reverse
mentoring. Personally, I have learned a lot from my young subordinates and I feel the policy should be made available for all. I also feel that from time to time, I need coaches and mentors to motivate me. One cannot go higher with self motivation. Hence, a regular dialogue with someone senior is necessary, who could give you feedback on how you are doing and help you in reflecting. For example, I applied for the new York position in my organization and got rejected. I am sure there would be ample reasons for the rejection, but I need someone to give me feedback on why was I rejected, so that I don’t commit the same mistake again. Also, I need someone to coach me so that I get selected the next time around. (Rajiv, Consulting)

I have spent 30 years in the industry and I see that a lot of colleagues have no clue on what they are going to do once they retire. I think the organization should invest in getting folks like me prepared for retirement. This could include an understanding of managing time, resources, and relationships. I am going to be gainfully engaged in consulting assignments and teaching at various B-schools. I have also enrolled in a PhD program to extend my retirement by a couple of years. (Ashraf, Construction)

The Young generation participants were very vocal about their expectations regarding career management interventions from organizations. It was found that they seek immediate managerial support as central to all other career interventions. They expect their managers to acknowledge their contributions through immediate reward and faster promotions, provide regular performance feedback, and help them in overcoming weaknesses while focusing on their strengths and competencies. They also want their supervisors to conduct career discussions and guide them through making tough career choices. Immediate supervisors act as a lynchpin between the Young generation and the organization; hence, it is very crucial for them to support and facilitate career management interventions for the Young generation employees.

In a large study on 4811 respondents from Indian organizations, Tymon, Stumpf, & Smith (2011) found that managers play an important role in retention and career management of employees across all ages. In an era where most of the career management tools are moving online and organizations are encouraging young employees to self manage their careers with the help of those tools, immediate supervisors assist employees in making tough career decisions. The Young generation also wants a clear understanding of various careers and career paths available in the organization through online employee portals and career workshops. While suggesting a career system model for Indian organizations, Krishnan & Maheshwari (2011) too suggested that career systems help employees to manage their own career development and plan for long and short term career goals for themselves within the organization.
Flattening of organizational structures poses a problem of providing vertical progression for good performance. Hence, organizations are offering employees lateral career movement and exposure to new geographies or organizational units. These opportunities give wider exposure to employees and helps organizations in retaining the best talent with the organization (Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2011). The Middle generation participants want career relevant learning through such mobility exposures. The role of performance based career progression and transparency in career planning is vital for the Middle generation participants. Lateral moves to create cross functional experience and performance appraisal as a basis for career planning requires active involvement of the organization in designing and planning of employees careers (Budhwar & Baruch, 2003). These policies form a part of advanced HRM policies. Indian organizations which are struggling to formulate basic HRM policies find it very difficult to institutionalize such policies for all employees, and hence the outcomes of such policies are enjoyed by a limited few.

Similarly, flattening of organizations also creates issues of scant senior management positions. In such situations, these participants want senior members of the organization to sponsor their candidature for senior management position. Sponsorship is the process of a sponsor nominating or supporting a protégé’s promotion (Friday, E., Friday, & Green, 2004). Earlier studies have found sponsorship and sponsors to be vital for the upward mobility of a protégé (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Kanter, 1977).

In this context, Mountford (2013) found that organizations do not have structured Human Resource policies to support and retain senior employees, and that most of the Human Resource strategies are predominantly practices enacted due to a few individuals who have a passion to retain and sustain senior members of the organization. Participants from the Senior generation were very vociferous about their expectation from the organizations with regard to career management. They want to work more and want the organization to design policies and practices to assist them in extending their work engagement with the organization. Earlier research (Mountford 2011; Proper, Deeg, & van der Beek, 2009) too found that Baby boomers wanted to stay at work and work longer than the previous generations. According to Kooij, de Lange, Jansen, Dikkers (2008), ageing impacts motivation to work, but "motivation to continue to work” aptly defines senior employees’ quest to find meaningful work. This motivation could stem from a need to remain active in the workforce, derive
satisfaction from using their skills, gaining a sense of accomplishment from jobs performed, or may be driven by purely financial reasons (Lord, 2004). Noe, Noe, & Bachhuber (1990) too found that career resilience\(^5\) is significantly higher in the later stages of a career than in the earlier stages, implying that senior employees have higher career motivation in the later stages of their career. The Senior generation respondents in the present study too were very keen to share their knowledge with young employees. Similarly, in a survey on 1000 workers in the age group of 40 to 59 years in Australia, Jackson, Walter and Felmingham (2006) found that 82% of the senior respondents wanted to stay only in those organizations where they were able to pass down knowledge to young colleagues.

The Young and Senior generation participants in the presented study expressed that they wanted coaching and mentoring support to succeed in their careers. While the Young generation wants performance coaching to help them enhance their performance within the organization, the Senior generation wants mentors to help them reflect upon career choices and provide motivational support from time to time. Additionally, they find a lot of merit in reverse mentoring, to learn new things from their young colleagues. Poulson (2006) posited that with the changing definition of career and career paradigm, the nature and role of mentoring and mentors has changed. From making opportunities available for the mentee the role has shifted to that of learning alliance where mentor acts as a sounding board assisting in reflecting on mentees crucial life decisions and helping mentees in making transitions in career phases (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002).

**Career Challenges**

“Career challenges” is a well researched theme under career studies. Studies have looked at challenges at various life stages of career incumbents. Studies on early career stage have found transitioning from school to corporate, transformation in identity, new skill development, and achieving young leader position as key challenges in early career stages (Benjamin & O’Reilly, 2011; Hill, 1992). Mid-career studies have focused on challenges in reaching a senior position (Kattara, 2005), poor career choices and work role transitions (Blenkinsopp & Zdunczyk, 2005) and challenges relevant to gender differences. Gordon and Whelan-Berry (2005) have studied the midcareer

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\(^5\) Career Resilience is the extent to which people resist career barriers, which determines an employee’s persistence in attaining career goals (London, 1990).
challenges of women. The researchers note that balancing career and family expectations become a challenge for women, and most women respond to these challenges either by continuing to work, leaving businesses, deciding to be involved in their own business, or moving to more altruistic settings. The late-life career challenges have focused on career planning post retirement. In congruence with earlier studies, the current theme looks at the career challenges of generational participants.

**Young Generation**

*I always feel anxious when I think, what will happen if I am not able to achieve all my dreams about career and how my life should be. There is so much volatility in the market that the chances of being absolutely successful and absolutely unsuccessful are equal. We are going to live our lives paying EMI's.* (Tarun, Manufacturing)

*After completing my summers, I got a PPO from the company. They wanted me to go to one of their manufacturing plants in Andhra Pradesh. They have worker settlement coming up in four years; hence, they wanted me to go there and work on that settlement. I refused their offer because I got commitment anxiety, what if I am not able to cope up with a new language in Andhra? What if I don’t like the work and get bored before four years? And who knows what’s going to happen in four years?* (Aishwarya, FMCG)

**Middle Generation**

*I have reached a situation where one can’t move up just on the basis of competencies, you need to have the right network to push you ahead. I feel my career has reached a plateau, and I am not a type of a person who will go around networking for the sake of getting roles and job opportunities. Secondly, in the long run all our skills get obsolete, and there is a constant struggle of keeping oneself relevant and agile. To add to the woes of my generation is the growing competition coming from young people.* (Kiran, Power)

*I feel there is an absence of role model in the industry or my organization. There is no one who can inspire you to be someone or nobody whose career or life is strong enough to be a role model.* (Prasanna, Healthcare Pharmaceuticals)

**Senior Generation**

*If my generation paid the price of the socialist ideology, then this generation is bearing the cost of the free market, survival of the fittest, and keeping up with the Joneses society that we are becoming. This competition and free market philosophy is hurting us too. Now once I am retired out of this organization, I will face the question of keeping myself gainfully engaged in the coming years. The problem is not going to be work, the problem is that I have spend so many years being too busy with work, the sudden vacuum created by no work is going to be too challenging.* (Aman, Manufacturing)

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6 PPO- Pre-Placement Offer
The Young generation participants face a lot of achievement anxiety with respect to their careers. Career related anxiety is a common phenomenon across youth in different countries. Tsintziras (2013) observed that in Canada, the Gen Y are anxious because there is less certainty of future jobs and massive competitions among peers is a source of stress for the Gen Y. In India, noted marketing professional Rama Bijapurkar (2014), in her recent book “A never before world: Tracking the evolution of consumer India,” notes that young people in India have high aspiration and anxiety due to various reasons. The fear of failure, not being able to achieve the dreams of self and parents, and not being able to compete with peers are some of the reasons for this anxiety. Coming from middle class nuclear families, they want to achieve more than what their parents did, albeit in lesser time. This achievement drive pushes them to the edge of extreme anxiety of failure. The new coined term for this anxiety and fear is “Fear of Missing Out,” commonly known as FOMO (Schawbel, 2014). The constant urge to check smart phones is due to such FOMO, as they do not wish to miss out on anything important happening in their world.

Reaching a career plateau with no hierarchical growth was one of the biggest challenges of the Middle generation employees. Lack of social network was the key reason attributed to this plateauing. Social networking impacts career success and has ramifications on personal and professional opportunities of individuals (Baker, 1994; Torres, 2005; Wolff and Moser, 2009). The common maxim “it is not what you know, but who you know” is the basic assumption underlying the boundaryless career framework. The modern career theory perspective (boundary less, protean, and multidirectional) defines success in subjective terms, and hence defines career plateau as the absence of a challenging job or inability to achieve work-life balance (Gibson, Hardy, & Buckley, 2014). From a traditional career theory perspective, career plateau is a stage where an employee ceases to experience hierarchical growth or face employment stability, or perceives limited possibilities of advancement (Ference, Stoner, & Warren, 1977; Slocum, Cron, Hanson, & Rawlings, 1985; Tremblay, Roger & Toulouse 1995; Veiga, 1981). The Middle generation participants in the present study articulated their understanding of career plateau from the traditional career perspective of limited hierarchical advancement. This finding propagates that hierarchical advancement gives directionality to career, and hence is still very crucial for Indian employees.
The second challenge faced by Middle generation employees was an absence of role models in the organization. Role models have been efficiently used by organizations to assist young employees in identity and skill development, but recent research posits that mature employees need role models to develop their self concept in the later stages of their organizational careers (Gibson & Barron, 2003). Such role models assist in emulating adaptability and agility in organizations in later career stages.

“What will I do once I retire?” was identified as one of the biggest challenges for the Senior generation participants. The Senior generation faces the challenge of keeping themselves gainfully engaged post retirement. The need to continue work assignments post retirement is a well researched topic. Research propagates that prolonged ageing due to a healthier life style, motivates senior employees to continue working post retirement. The challenge though, is finding appropriate work assignments which gainfully engage incumbents along with exhausting there competencies and skills.

Discussion

The findings on generational differences in terms of career, as explained in the previous sections, have been summarized in Table 5.1. A deeper analysis of the themes attests that the definition and meaning of career and career success have become very fluid, and are not consistent throughout the lifetime. This fluidity is predominantly caused by external factors like socio economic and technological changes, as well as internal factors like exposure and experience within different organizations, and life stage of the incumbent. These definitional and meaning changes impact mobility patterns, orientation towards learning, intention to stay, reward expectations, and psychological contract with the organization.

Transitioning from college to career, the Young generation is in constant search for identity through meaningful work exposure. This search for identity is either mitigated through mobility between organizations and jobs, or through intermittent career and study breaks. Consequently the exploration phase in individuals’ career life cycle (Super, 1990) has been extended with the Young generation’s indulgence in exploration of various career and life options. Research on emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004) posits that between the ages of 18 and 25 years, adults postpone decisions pertaining to work, family, and responsibilities in general. The current research posits
that this phase of identity development has major impact on future career choices along with the career trajectory of the Young generation.

Although existing theories provide some understanding about the physiological, psychological, and social dimensions of the relationships between ageing and work, it is important to note that today’s employees, particularly those who are older adults, are living at a time when each of these dimensions of ageing are shifting. Career development theories postulate that older workers disengage from work in the latter stages of employment, as a preparatory phase prior to the transition to retirement (Super, 1984). However, the current study found that the Senior generation participants rendered resilience to work for longer years after their retirement. While challenging the norms of retirement and stereotypes against senior people, they exhibit a determination to explore new career opportunities after retirement. Contemporary career theories invite examination of ways that work environments might engage the passion and commitment of the Senior generation. These career paradigms celebrate the notion of “Second Careers,” and allow the possibility for the Senior generation to enter, exit, and re-enter, and change careers at virtually all stages of the life cycle.

Baruch (2006) postulates that individuals rely on organizations for their career identity. “Who am I, and what I do?” is an integral part of one’s work identity. The traditional career approach looked at organizations as the givers of identity. The concept of Protean career supports the fact that the changes in work boundaries impact boundaries of identities too, and over a period people develop a personal identity to balance work and family life. This personal identity is recognized as a meta-skill by Hall (1996), who further argues that this meta-skill is devoid of any particular organization, and helps the individual in experiencing psychological success over the course of a career. In the current study, the Young generation defined career as an extension of an individual’s personality and identity, which is consciously managed by choosing meaningful engagements, which in turn, helps in achieving individual potential. The Middle generation defined it as a ladder of learning experiences, and the Senior generation defined it as a ladder of succession of jobs and designations, which brings in constant change and enhancement provided by the organization. It is evident from these definitions that the Indian workforce is somewhere between traditional careers and more modern views of careers such as the concept of Protean careers. In future research, it would indeed be interesting to explore the impact of these definitions of career on work identities.
Further, the impact of economic and social milieu on career definition and meaning is evident from the respondents’ narratives. The Middle generation, which started working in a period of negative job growth between the period between 1970 and 1990, saw a large number of educated youth from developing countries like India migrate for further education and jobs to countries like the United States of America because of limited professional opportunities in India (Saxenian, 2005). Sociologists later termed this phenomenon as Brain Drain

The concept of boundaryless career propagates individuals’ movement between jobs, employers, and occupations. Though participants of the current study were comfortable with movement between jobs and employers, they resisted movement between occupations. Further, while the traditional career theory propagates objective markers of career success i.e., organizational status, pay, and promotion as key to defining one’s success (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989), modern career focuses subjective markers of internal sources of fulfillment via learning and development, through different jobs and non work related assignments (Hall, 2002). Participants of the current study unanimously quoted salary as a key career success criterion, though external marketability, meaningful work, learning, and respect among peers were crucial for the Middle generation.

In sum, the modern career theory is based on the assumptions of “individual responsibility,” wherein individuals take responsibility of their career futures and growth. On the other hand, the traditional career theory purports that organizations play a crucial role in planning and managing employee careers (Brousseau, Driver, Eneroth, & Larsson, 1996; Peiperl & Baruch, 1997; Sturges, Conway, & Liefooghe, 2010; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). The modern career also accentuates the need for individuals to have self directed orientations to career management devoid of external influences, high level of tolerance for uncertainty, specialized focus on learning for career development along with special ties, or networks to move between companies and jobs. The current study found that though generational participants showed an individual drive for learning and development, they lacked the network to move between organizations. The research participants also stressed on the need for organizations to assist them in managing their careers through interventions like coaching, mentoring, and learning based on career development sessions, among others. These arguments

7 For definition, refer Carrington and Detragiache (1998).
suggest that employees still rely on organizations for managing their careers, and the contemporary view of careers being individually driven only reflects a partial reality. The purist version of the recent literature, which portrays an absolute shift from traditional careers to modern careers, may be the overarching reality of average career experiences of most individuals. However, the present study found that most respondents are neither entirely independent and boundaryless, nor are absolutely relying on the organizations for growth and development. Hence, a balanced perspective is necessary while viewing careers.

Having looked at the findings with reference to generational differences in careers, the next chapter presents the findings related to learning.
Table 5.1
Summary of the findings on generational differences in career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Young Generation</th>
<th>Middle Generation</th>
<th>Senior Generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is career?</strong></td>
<td>An extension of an individual’s personality and identity, consciously managed by choosing meaningful engagements, which help in achieving individual potential.</td>
<td>Is a ladder of learning experiences.</td>
<td>Is a ladder of succession of jobs and designations, which brings in constant change and enhancement, provided by the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career trajectory &amp; Mobility</strong></td>
<td>Internal upward, internal lateral, external upward, and external lateral.</td>
<td>Free agents, Internal upward, and Lateral Upward.</td>
<td>Job in Job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• No. of jobs</strong></td>
<td>Many job changes</td>
<td>4–5 jobs</td>
<td>One or maximum two jobs in a lifetime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Reasons for change</strong></td>
<td>Peer Pressure, Pay Hike, Experience.</td>
<td>Increase in designation role and pay.</td>
<td>Better role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career Success</strong></td>
<td>Organizational position, advancement, and receiving better position along with financial stability. Achievement orientation</td>
<td>Meaningful work, accomplishment by helping others, mentoring, and continuously learning and challenging oneself. External Marketability focus</td>
<td>Respect among other professionals and peers, transforming lives of individuals, organization, influencing profitability, and adulation for achievements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Subjective vs objective</strong></td>
<td>Objective Criteria</td>
<td>Subjective Criteria</td>
<td>Subjective Criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Self/Other Referent</strong></td>
<td>Others (Peers, Friends, past colleagues)</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Both self and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career aspirations</strong></td>
<td>Optimistic about their career, short term planning, change in career trajectory, aiming for leadership position in coming 5 years. Intellectually creative and challenging assignment.</td>
<td>Create a brand name for self in the industry. Bigger roles internationally. Exposure in various domains of the business.</td>
<td>Extension of career post retirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expectations on career management interventions from the organization</strong></td>
<td>Immediate reward/promotions, feedback, guidance for career choices, understanding career paths in the organization coaching and workshops.</td>
<td>Career Relevant learning and mobility exposures, performance based career planning, coaching and sponsorship.</td>
<td>Motivation to continue work, want policies and practices to assist them in extending their work engagement with the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career Challenges</strong></td>
<td>Anxiety, fear of failure.</td>
<td>Career Plateau.</td>
<td>What will I do after I retire?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>