Exploring Career Aspirations of Employees in IT/ITES Industries:
The Demographic Linkages

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ABSTRACT

The rapid changes in technological, economic, political and cultural environment have profound effects on the world of Career. These changes have created a kind of uncertainty in the nature and culture of work, thereby have affected the careers and lives of people. Career is becoming the top most priority in people's lives. There is a shift from employment to career owing to the many changes that have happened in the economic and social landscapes. This paper rises to understand the key ingredient of the Career trajectory – "Career Aspiration". Career aspiration is the starting point in the Career life cycle of an individual. Organisations and Individuals approach Career aspirations in a variety of ways. This paper has provided a stimulus for reflecting on and evaluating Individual career aspirations. Acknowledging that not all aspirations can be realised and that choices must be made, the discussion presented here challenges organisations to be more explicit about the employees' understanding and clarity of aspirations, both judged and determined. This paper analyses the perspectives of respondents with different demographics and has used a survey instrument for this purpose. The survey instrument was administered on 600 respondents (employees working in IT/ITES industries) from within and outside of the Bangalore city.

Keywords: Career Aspirations, Information Technology, Fulfilment of Career Aspirations, Career Choices.

INTRODUCTION:

Human needs are the basis of all the philosophies. People always move towards the achievement of certain needs. When one need is fulfilled a person seeks to fulfil the next one and so on. Civilizations have evolved and moved with this concept of need satisfaction and have found out ways for fulfilment of the needs. Working and earning money for a living is the most prominent ways of need fulfilment. We do what we need, to cover the basics, paying our bills, securing the roof above our head, staying safe in our endeavours and relationships. Beyond this level of working for a living is the concept of career. A person transitions from the idea of 'job' to 'career' when all of his basic needs are satisfied.

Careers are important for both Individuals and Organisations. An individual's career is the sole source of one's natural expression of self. For some people, Careers are the purpose of life and the source of one's expression. Yet others believe that there is a wide difference between an individual's career and his life. In any case, career is an integral component of one's life. Individuals aspire for certain careers in the course of their professional lives. The nature of aspirations is tacit, evolving, nonconcrete, uncertain and can surface suddenly or emerge slowly. They are multi-dimensional, concurrent, dynamic and vary in significance and time-scale (Hart 2004, 2012)[1].

Organisations approach employees' careers in a variety of ways. Most of the Organisations draw Career Paths for their employees and guide them to grow up the ladder. The Careers in the Organisations are largely dependent on the scope of employment in the industry it operates. In India, Information Technology (IT) and

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[1] A Dynamic multi-dimensional model of aspirations (Hart 2004,66)

Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) Industries are the largest sourcing destinations. The IT industry accounts for approximately 67 per cent of the US$ 124-130 billion market[2] employing about 10 million workforces. In the light of several global IT firms setting up their innovation centres in India, there is more scope for employment in the coming years in this sector. This creates an ardent need to manage the aspirations of employees in this sector in order to motivate, develop and sustain the workforce here which results in boosting the knowledge economy and enhances the quality of work force.

SCOPE OF THE PAPER:

Two business verticals were studied for the purpose of this paper:
IT Industry – Consisting of software companies involved in development, maintenance and publication of software. This industry also includes software services such as consulting, documentation and data recovery.
ITES Industry – Consisting of companies that are involved in outsourcing services which require involvement of IT. This industry includes services such as banking and finance, telecommunications, insurance, etc...
The paper focuses on exploring and understanding the career aspirations of employees in IT/ITES industries. It also studies the career related perspectives in terms of employees' aspirations. Demographical factors will always have a profound effect on Careers of Individuals. For the purpose of this paper, Age, gender and Qualification have been considered to check the significance with regard to fulfilment of Career aspirations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Extensive review of literature has been done during the course of the study. A few of them are discussed below.
Shelley J Correll (2004)[3] developed and evaluated a theoretical model that describes the constraining effect of cultural beliefs about gender on the emerging career – relevant aspirations of men and women. The model implies that, if men and women make different assessments of their own competence at career-relevant tasks, they will also form different aspirations for career paths and activities believed to require competence at these tasks.
Shalini Garg, Shilpa Jain (2011)[4], in a case study on Global Pvt Ltd, has shared a success story of Global Pvt Ltd where they implemented career growth plans for their associates and combated the attrition in their organizations. The case study opined that the reason behind attrition is a push from within rather than a pull from outside. GPL University helps its employees to grow and gain knowledge on the subject of their interest and grooms them to take up the role of their choice.
P.S. Srinivasan (2007)[5], has felt that given the entry of a large number of educated youth into the workforce in India over a very short period, fulfilling their career aspirations has emerged as one of the greatest challenges for organisations. These views were pointed out in an article submitted by Totus consulting, Bangalore, to highlight the industry trends and specific actions taken to address career aspirations.
Caroline Sarojini Hart (2016)[6] explores the complex roles of aspirations in relation to human development, drawing upon the capability approach. In the article "How Do Aspirations Matter?", Caroline stresses on the criteria that inform choices about the cultivation and selection of different aspirations of individuals.

METHODOLOGY:

Survey Instrument:

Personal In-depth interviews were conducted among 9 experienced professionals in top IT and ITES organisations in Bangalore City. Open ended questions were posed to the Interviewees and responses were recorded. Convenient Sampling was used to choose the respondents who had more than 10 years of experience in the IT and ITES industries. Based on the responses, the current trends and perspectives of employees' aspirations were studied, and a survey instrument was created. Later, the survey instrument was subjected to a pilot survey comprising of 111 representative sample. Reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha (Result = 0.86) and factor analysis were conducted to check the reliability and validity of the survey instrument. Based on the results of the pilot survey, a closed ended, five-point LIKERT scaled questionnaire was finalised. It comprised of two parts, Part A dealt with demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status, educational

[2] Source: https://www.ibef.org
[3] Shelley J Correll (2004). Constraints into Preferences: Gender, Status, and Emerging Career Aspirations. American Sociological Review, Sage Journals. USA
[4] Shalini Garg, Shilpa Jain (2011). Mapping career attrition to combat attrition. Case study, India.
[5] Srinivasan.P.S (2007). Fulfilling Career Aspirations – Emerging Approaches. NHRD Journal, India
[6] Caroline Sarojini Hart (2016). How Do Aspirations Matter? Journal of Human Development and Capabilities, 17:3, 324-341.

qualification, experience and departments. Part B contained statements to understand career aspirations, the efforts of individuals in achieving those aspirations, the efforts of the organisation in achieving fulfilling the aspirations of their employees and the measurement of the extent of fulfilment of aspirations. This Survey instrument was administered on 600 respondents employed in IT and ITES industries located within Bangalore City and outside of Bangalore City.

Sampling Frame:
The sample for the study included employees working in the IT and ITES sectors. The respondent organisations were selected based on the minimum employee size of 250. Random sampling was used for the study. 600 respondents were the total sample determined based on the calculation - 7,50,000 IT/ITES employees[7] with a confidence interval of 4 and Confidence level of 95%.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS:

Understanding Career Aspirations:
Opinion about the Career aspirations of the respondents were compiled through the survey instrument. The Friedman's test analysis results are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Friedman Test- Career aspirations

	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Reliability
Having a secured job for the lifetime	3.95	1.03	4.24	
Attaining Work life balance	4.38	0.79	**5.50**	
Achieving Higher Designations	4.16	0.90	4.82	
Having a sense of recognition/appreciation	4.27	0.78	5.10	
Acquiring Talent, Learning and gaining expertise	4.46	0.68	**5.75**	0.857
Having an opportunity to be creative	4.37	0.72	**5.35**	
Pursuing a passion/hobby	4.11	0.86	4.55	
Obtaining Higher Remuneration	4.10	0.90	4.51	
Having Autonomy and Independence at work	4.31	0.78	5.18	

Among all the 9 factors analysed, Employees have felt acquiring talent and gaining expertise is the most important aspiration. This is supported by the above table by the mean rank 5.75 which ranks first. Attaining work life balance has scored second with a mean score of 5.50 which signifies that in today's situation where there are longer working hours at workplace, employees are aspiring to find a right balance between Professional life and Personal life. Employees have also felt that having an opportunity to be creative is as important as any other aspiration. This factor scores third with a mean score of 5.35 which indicates that employees aspire to be innovative and find out various creative means of doing their tasks.

Factors influencing the framing of career aspirations:
Super D.E (1990)[8], has constructed a model symbolizing the influential factors determining the careers of employees. These factors help the employees to frame their career aspirations. Based on this model and related review of literature, three determinants, viz., Career Decisions, Life Style and Internal and External Career Opportunities are deliberated.

Career Related Decisions as a Determinant:
In order to analyse Career Related Decisions as the factor influencing the respondent towards Career choices, the Friedman's test analysis was used, and the results were given in Table 2.

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[7] Source: NASSCOM Data as on March 2017
[8] The Archway determinants model – Donald Super (1990)

Table 2: Friedman Test- Career Decisions

	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Reliability
I feel my career aspirations are based on the IT/ITES market growth potential	4.12	0.79	2.13	0.659
I feel my interest towards technical/non-technical expertise has landed me in my current role	4.12	0.80	2.15	
I have chosen this job/role out of my passion	3.73	0.96	1.73	

The analysis has showed that while making their career decisions on their current job roles, employees' interest towards technical/non-technical expertise, was ranked first with a mean rank of 2.15. This indicates that "a push from within" matter most than "a pull from outside". The fact that the decisions about aspirations are dependent on the IT/ITES market growth potential is said be in the second place with a mean rank of 2.13. Passion for their jobs is ranked third with a mean score of 1.73.

Life Style as a Determinant:
Life style of employees have an important role in determining the career choices. The factors like ethnicity, culture, social status of employees etc were studied in order to understand if these have any impact on framing the career aspirations. Friedman Test was conducted to analyse the statements relating to lifestyle of the employees with regard to career choices.

Table 3: Friedman Test- Life Style

	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Reliability
My career choices have always been based on academic qualification and education	3.81	0.92	2.26	0.636
My culture and ethnicity play a role in making my career choice	3.47	1.05	1.96	
My family's social status has influenced me to choose my career	3.23	1.20	1.78	

Employees have felt that academic qualification and education has influenced them the most to make career choices and this factor has been ranked first with a mean score of 2.26. It is followed by the culture and ethnicity factors with a mean score of 1.96 and the factor – Family's social status has been ranked third.

Internal and External Career Opportunities as a Determinant:
Internal and External Career Opportunities have a strong say while making career choices. In the light of Career opportunities inside and outside of the Organisation, employees tend to take decisions on their career aspirations based on these factors. The Friedman's test analysis was used to study this, and the results were given in Table 4.

Table 4: Friedman Test- Internal and External Career Opportunities

	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Reliability
I am influenced by the external career opportunities in making my career decisions	3.44	1.00	1.88	0.666
I tend to compare my career movement with my peer group within and outside of the organization	3.54	0.98	1.95	
I feel my career aspirations are based on the IT/ITES market growth potential	3.76	0.92	2.17	

With a mean score of 2.1 and ranking first, Employees aspirations are largely based IT/ITES market growth potential. It is followed by the factors, Career movement within and outside of the organization and external career opportunities, with a mean score of 1.95 and 1.98 respectively.

Overall Factor wise fulfilment of career aspirations of employees:
An attempt has been made to study the opinion of Fulfilment of career aspirations of employees. After converting the qualitative information of the opinion into a quantitative one, the average scores were obtained

from the respondents on various factors like 'Job security, Work Life Balance, Higher Designations, Recognition/Appreciation, Expertise, Creativity, Passion, Higher Remuneration, Autonomy' and obtained results are and presented in Table 5

Table 5: Factor wise fulfilment of career aspirations of employees

Factor	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Mean %
Job security	600	1	5	3.95	1.03	**79.03**
Work Life Balance	600	1	5	4.38	0.79	87.63
Higher Designations	600	1	5	4.16	0.90	83.13
Recognition/Appreciation	600	1	5	4.27	0.78	85.43
Expertise	600	1	5	4.46	0.68	**89.27**
Creativity	600	1	5	4.37	0.72	87.43
Passion	600	1	5	4.11	0.86	82.27
Higher Remuneration	600	1	5	4.10	0.90	82.07
Autonomy	600	1	5	4.31	0.78	86.17

Factor wise distribution of mean, Standard Deviation and mean percentage of Fulfilment of career aspirations of employees shows that among 9 factors, the highest mean score (4.46 ± 0.68) which is 89.27% is obtained for the factor "Expertise" whereas, the lowest mean score (3.95 ± 1.03) which is 79.03% was obtained for 'Job security'. This indicates that employees prefer to gain expertise in their relevant field and staying updated in the technology sector is always a need in the industry. They feel having "expertise" gives them more fulfilment in their careers. Of all the factors, employees are not much worried about "Job Security" as they view this factor as a stumbling block for their careers.

HYPOTHESES:

Gender and Career Aspirations:
Table 5 below, shows the Gender-wise distribution of the respondents. With regard to Gender, the distribution shows that from IT Industry 69% of the respondents are Male and 31% of the respondents are female. From ITES Industry, 71% of respondents are Male and 29% of the respondents are female. It is evident from the data that on both the sectors; Male representation is on the leading side.

Table 5: Gender – Frequency and percentage

		Industry currently employed				Total
		IT		ITES		
		N	%	N	%	
Gender	Male	207	69	212	71	419
	Female	93	31	88	29	181
	Total	**300**	**100**	**300**	**100**	**600**

Null Hypothesis:
There is no significant difference between the mean scores regarding fulfilment of career aspirations of employees and Gender of the employees.

Table 5a: Gender wise fulfilment of career aspirations of employees

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Z	P
Job security	Male	419	3.92	1.05	1.27	0.204
	Female	181	**4.03**	0.99		
Work Life Balance	Male	419	4.33	0.80	2.26	0.024*
	Female	181	**4.49**	0.75		
Higher Designations	Male	419	**4.16**	0.91	0.33	0.740
	Female	181	4.14	0.87		
Recognition/Appreciation	Male	419	4.25	0.78	1.00	0.316
	Female	181	**4.32**	0.79		

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Z	P
Expertise	Male	419	**4.47**	0.64	0.51	0.611
	Female	181	4.44	0.75		
Creativity	Male	419	**4.37**	0.74	0.03	0.973
	Female	181	4.37	0.67		
Passion	Male	419	4.09	0.87	0.87	0.382
	Female	181	**4.16**	0.86		
Higher Remuneration	Male	419	4.07	0.91	1.42	0.156
	Female	181	**4.18**	0.87		
Autonomy	Male	419	4.26	0.81	2.19	0.029*
	Female	181	**4.41**	0.71		

* Significant at 5 %; ** Significant at 1 %

It can be inferred from the above analysis that aspiration of Higher Designations, Expertise, Creativity was found maximum among Male respondents and about Job security, Work Life Balance, Recognition/Appreciation, Passion, Higher Remuneration, Autonomy was found highest among Female respondents.

Further to test the significant difference between the mean score among the respondents with respect Gender the ANOVA is used and the result is also shown in Table 5a. Since the P value is less than 0.05 for the factors, Work Life Balance and Autonomy, there is significant difference in the mean scores with respect to Gender and their fulfilment of Career Aspirations.

Age and Career Aspirations:

The analysis with regard to the age of the respondents have resulted showing a distinctive trend with 24% of IT respondents who were below 25 years of age, 38% were in the age group of 25-30 years and 22% were in the age group of 30-35 years. Only 3% of the IT respondents were above 45 years. In case of ITES population, 35% were in the age group of 25-30 years, 27% were in the age group of 30-35 years, and only 5% were in the age group of above 45 years.

Table 6: Age – Frequency and percentage

		Industry currently employed				Total
		IT		ITES		
		N	%	N	%	
Age	Below 25 years	71	24	43	14	114
	25 to 30 years	113	38	104	35	217
	30 to 35 years	65	22	82	27	147
	35 to 40 years	28	9	50	17	78
	40 to 45 years	15	5	7	2	22
	Above 45 years	8	3	14	5	22
	Total	**300**	**100**	**300**	**100**	**600**

Null Hypothesis:

There is no significant difference between the mean scores regarding fulfilment of career aspirations of employees and Age of the employees.

Table 6a: Age wise fulfilment of career aspirations of employees

	Age								ANOVA	P
	Up to 25		25-30		30-35		Above 45			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Job security	4.05[b]	1.09	**4.06[b]**	0.96	3.86[a,b]	1.05	3.82[a,b]	0.73	2.76	0.018*
Work Life Balance	4.32	0.81	**4.46**	0.71	4.39	0.85	4.14	0.77	1.20	0.310
Higher Designations	4.13[a,b]	0.98	4.28[a,b]	0.82	4.10[a,b]	0.88	**4.36[b]**	0.58	2.35	0.040*
Recognition/Appreciation	4.26	0.86	**4.32**	0.76	4.24	0.84	4.23	0.69	0.39	0.853
Expertise	4.38	0.83	4.54	0.64	4.46	0.61	**4.55**	0.60	1.43	0.210

	Age								ANOVA	P
	Up to 25		25-30		30-35		Above 45			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Creativity	4.43	0.68	4.38	0.70	4.35	0.75	**4.55**	0.67	0.85	0.515
Passion	4.09	0.85	4.12	0.86	4.10	0.83	**4.32**	0.57	0.29	0.919
Higher Remuneration	4.07	0.97	**4.19**	0.87	4.08	0.86	4.18	0.80	1.08	0.369
Autonomy	**4.33**	0.75	4.29	0.79	4.29	0.82	4.18	0.80	0.25	0.940

* Significant at 5 %; ** Significant at 1 %

It can be opined from the above analysis that among the all the factors, Autonomy was found important for respondents with the Age group of below 25 years indicating that younger population need more freedom at work. In the age group 25-30, the analysis has shown that Job security, Work Life Balance, Recognition/Appreciation, Higher Remuneration was found prominent. This indicates as employees grow in their organisations they tend to aspire more, rather than just earning money and gaining expertise. Factors like Higher Designations, Expertise, Creativity, Passion was found prominent among the respondents with age group of above 45 years.

Further to test the significant difference between the mean score among the respondents with respect Age the ANOVA test is used and the result is also shown in table 6a. Since the P value is less than 0.05 regarding Job security, Higher Designations, there is significant difference in the mean scores with respect to Age of the respondents and fulfilment of their career aspirations.

Educational Qualification and Career Aspirations:
Education Qualification has a direct association with the career aspirations of the employees. The following analysis supports this statement and it is presented below in Tables 7 and 7a.

Table 7: Educational Qualification- Frequency and percentage

		Industry currently employed				Total
		IT		ITES		
		N	%	N	%	
Qualification	Diploma	5	2	10	3	15
	Graduation	200	67	126	42	326
	Post-Graduation	94	31	159	53	253
	Doctoral Degree	1	0	5	2	6
	Total	300	100	300	100	600

Null Hypothesis:
There is no significant difference between the mean scores regarding fulfilment of career aspirations of employees and Educational Qualification of the employees

Table 7a: Qualification-wise fulfilment of career aspirations of employees

	Education Qualification								ANOVA	P
	Diploma		Graduation		Post-Graduation		Doctorate Degree			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Job security	4.27[a,b]	0.88	3.99[a,b]	1.02	3.86[a]	1.05	**4.83**[b]	0.41	2.75	0.042*
Work Life Balance	4.33	0.72	4.40	0.74	4.36	0.85	**4.67**	0.82	0.38	0.766
Higher Designations	3.93	0.88	4.12	0.91	4.20	0.88	**4.83**	0.41	1.78	0.149
Recognition/Appreciation	4.00	0.76	4.25	0.81	4.31	0.76	**4.67**	0.52	1.40	0.243
Expertise	**4.60**	0.51	**4.51**	0.65	4.39	0.71	4.50	0.84	1.75	0.156
Creativity	**4.40**	0.51	4.35	0.74	**4.41**	0.70	4.17	0.75	0.51	0.679
Passion	**4.33**	0.49	4.13	0.88	4.08	0.85	4.33	1.03	0.65	0.581
Higher Remuneration	3.60	0.91	4.10	0.87	4.13	0.92	**4.33**	1.03	1.79	0.148
Autonomy	4.33	0.62	4.29	0.80	4.33	0.76	**4.33**	1.03	0.15	0.926

* Significant at 5 %; ** Significant at 1 %

It is inferred from the above analysis that the highest mean score is obtained for the factors - Expertise, Creativity, Passion it was among Diploma holders. Graduates have opined that having expertise in the relevant field makes them more fulfilled. On the other hand, Post graduates have felt that creativity as a career aspiration factor makes them more fulfilled.

Further to test the significant difference, the ANOVA test is used, and the result is shown in Table 7a. Since the P value is greater than 0.05 only for the factor- Job security, there is high significant difference in the mean scores found with respect to Education Qualification and the fulfilment of career aspirations.

CONCLUSIONS:

Considering the volatility of the IT/ITES sector, the focus on career aspirations should be broadened. A clear majority of population start with a Career in mind and end up in a different one achieved.

The analysis has shown that there is a clear significant difference among the demographics viz., Gender, Age and Educational Qualification of the respondents and fulfilment of career aspirations.

In conclusion, it can be opined that aspirations are vital to human development and yet their complexity presents several challenges. These are challenges related to the development and protection of the freedom to aspire, the challenge of supporting the transformation of aspirations into capabilities, the dilemmas related to the judgement of feasibility and the roles of aspiring in relation to both capability and functioning.

This study basically opines the fact that - a "push from within" matters most rather than the "pull from outside" for the career success of employees in the organisations.

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