Are Men more Intentional about their Careers than Women? An Exploration of the Career Trajectories of Indian Professionals

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Abstract

'Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus,' goes the popular adage. Research studies the world over have only reinforced the truth behind this statement, and we now live in a society wherein the differences in attitudes, aspirations, and intentions of both the genders have been widely acknowledged. Against this backdrop, egalitarian views that have come to supersede stereotypical notions on gender roles have paved way for women careers. However, the career progress rates of men and women are drastically different; for the record, though 27% of the entry level Indian workforce is women, only 5% of senior executives in India are so, as against a global average of 20%. Where does the change in approach or attitude (towards careers) between men and women come about? At what level and what age? Is there intentionality in career pathing by men? If so, where does it stem from? This report is based on a nation-wide survey of Indian professionals (men and women) and was aimed at finding answers to these pertinent questions. The respondents employed in the corporate sector typically belonged to distinctly different career stages namely early career, mid career, and advanced or matured career stages.

Keywords : career aspiration, career driver, career intentionality, career intentionality model (CIM), career continuity, career influencer, career motivator, career orientation, career trajectory, home primary, gender balance, Indian woman professional (IWP), Indian man professional (IMP)

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Intention drives every effort towards the desired results; career trajectories and growth therewith are also functions of a professional's intentions. Career intentionality may be defined as the extent to which a professional deploys intentions to chart his/her career trajectory. We could say that there is, in existence, a 'career intentionality model' that drives an individual towards intentionally pursuing a career. This model encompasses a professional's career orientation, career motivators, career drivers, career aspirations, and career influencers. The structure of the subsequent career graph - the ups and down included are strongly dependent on a person's intentions, a variable that is influenced by an individual's gender amongst other parameters of his/her socio-economic-educational profile.

Much has been talked globally about the ambition divide between men and women in the context of career

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progress. While men and women seem to be increasingly becoming equally intentional about their careers, a survey of men and women mid-level managers revealed that they have more similarities than differences (Noonan, McGowan, & Licina, 2008), the translations of their intentionality into career advancements seem to be significantly different - globally; only 5% of CEOs of Fortune 1000 companies are women (Fairchild, 2014). Barsh and Yee (2011) reported that , "Like their male counterparts, most young women want to move up. Many of those who advance retain that ambition" (p.5). Patten and Parker (2011) found that young women now topped young men in valuing a high-paying career. Two-thirds (66%) of the young women aged 18 to 34 years rated career high on their list of life priorities, compared with 59% of young men. However, it has also been found that career interruptions are more frequent amongst women (Taylor, 2011) as compared to men, and the prime reason behind this being familial responsibilities. According to Taylor (2011), "young working women are less likely than men to aspire to top management jobs" (p.1) (as cited in Patten & Parker, 2011). Yet another research, Malloy (2013) showed that, "women are less deliberate than men in their career progressions" (p.1). It was also understood that though men and women aspire for advancement in their organizations, fewer women, as compared to men, aspired to the C-level of management (Barsh & Yee, 2012).

A recent 2014 study of 'soon-to-be-professionals' in the U.S showed that women reported higher levels of occupational aspirations than college men. However, women also reported anticipating more barriers to their career advancement than their male peers (Watts, Frame, Moffett, Van Hein, & Hein, 2015). This is a pointer to the fact that though young men and women demonstrate similar levels of career intentionality, women are often more wary of the barriers they will face as they move career stages. An earlier study conducted in 2007 showed that women were less likely than men to desire promotion into a senior management position. This study strongly suggested dissociation between senior management roles and male characteristics . Another relevant research of Lyness and Thompson (2000) pointed out that, "Women reported greater barriers to career advancement - such as lack of culture fit and being excluded from informal networks, and greater importance of having a good track record and developing relationships to facilitate advancement than did men" (p.1). The author continued further, "successful women were less likely than successful men to report that mentoring facilitated their advancement" (p.1).

It may be noted that most studies cited were conducted on professionals in the West. Though Indian professionals are increasingly being recognized on global platforms for their technical competence, studies on their career aspirations and intentionality have been limited. It is in this context that the present study - a study that attempts to answer these pertinent questions for Indian professionals was carried out, the questions being - Is there an existence of a gender gap in career intentionality of Indian professionals? At what career stages do men and women typically start showing career intentionality? What can be done to bridge the gap that exists? What are the benefits of bridging this gap?

Let us explore some statistics associated with the Indian labour force. In the Indian socio-cultural milieu, the prescribed gender roles are almost mutually exclusive, and in spite of thought leaders advocating gender equality and balance, it continues to be socially acceptable for men to be the breadwinners and women to be the care takers. The overall gender gap in India is 64%, and India was at the 114th position on a tally of 136 countries as per the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index, 2014 (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche, & Zahidi, 2014). A few more unpleasant statistics - 42% of university graduates in India are women (Süssmuth-Dyckerhoff, Wang, & Chen, 2012), but only 27% of entry level workforce in India Inc. (Bagati, 2011, p.5) are women. Furthermore, 48% of Indian women abort their careers midway (Inderfurth & Khambatta, 2012), possibly because they aren't able to intentionally pursue careers as domesticities demand their time and focus. There has been a drop in female labour force participation in India (This figure declined by 6% during the period from 2003-2004 to 2009-2010) (Mahapatro, 2013).

It is, therefore, necessary to understand the causes behind this, a lower career intentionality amongst women could be one amongst the reasons. Furthermore, the maximum drain of female talent in the Indian corporate

sector occurs in the junior to mid-level (typically, when they are aged between 30 and 40 years and are consumed by the responsibilities of being the primary caretaker of their families and when they are most likely to encounter opportunities for career progress). Francesco and Mahtani (2011) found that, "The average percentage drop from junior to middle level positions is 29.06% in Asia, with India (48.07%) having the most significant drop at this level" (p. 4) (as cited in the Diversity & Inclusion in Asia Network, 2011). It could be because in spite of being intentional about their careers, women are not able to pursue this intentionality to reach for and break the invisible glass ceiling. Furthermore, the gender pay gap between urban male and female workers in India is almost ₹ 70/day (NSSO, 2010), an alarming statistic that shows that gender equality is far from a reality in urban India.

What are the factors that affect an individual's career intentionality? Do professionals tend to prescribe to a particular career intentionality model while charting their career trajectories? Apart from the parameters of an individual's socio-economic-educational profile, gender of a professional critically influences his/her career agenda and the intentionality that drives his/her career. For the cause of this study and in order to comprehensively quantify gender wise variability of an individual's career intentionality, a Career Intentionality Model (CIM) comprising of the following factors was developed. The factors or career intentionality drivers identified are as follows :

(1) Career Orientation : The relative importance a professional attributes to his/her career as against his/her home.

(2) Career Motivators : The individual(s) a professional idolizes and those who inspire him/her to conquer greater career heights.

(3) Career Drivers : The factors that drives a professional towards pursuing a career.

(4) Career Aspirations : The tangible/intangible outcomes an individual aspires to achieve by pursuing a career.

(5) Career Influencers : The support network that influences and shapes a professional's career path.
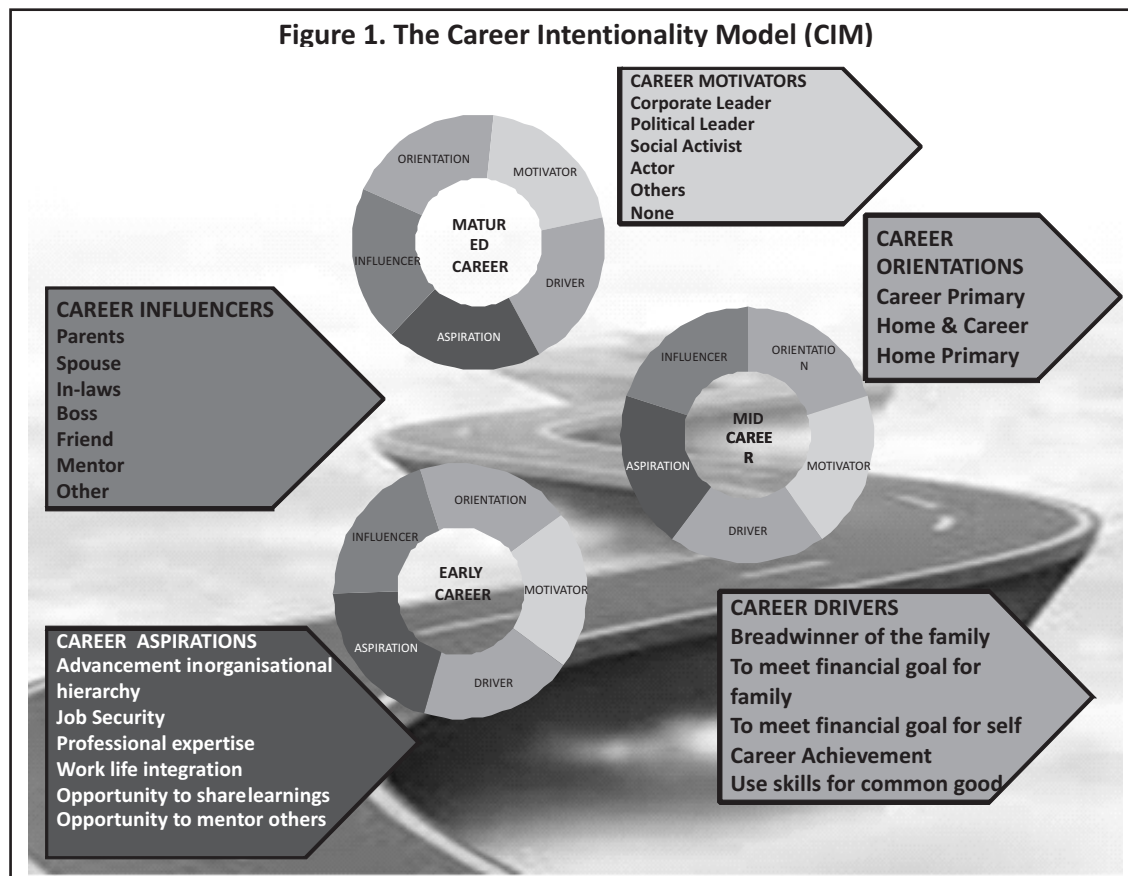
The outcomes of career intentionality were captured by the resultant career trajectories with respect to:

(1) Career Continuity : The extent to which a professional's career is interruption/break free.

(2) Career Growth : The extent to which a professional has successfully climbed the corporate ladder.

The experience gained over the years variedly impacts his/her career intentionality, thereby rendering a dynamic nature to this variable. For this reason, the study was conducted with specific focus on the career stage an individual is in. The career intentionality model that Indian professionals use and their consequent career paths were traced across three active career stages, namely:

(1) Early career (professionals up to the age of 30 years),

(2) Mid career (professionals between the ages of 30 and 40 years),

(3) Advanced or matured career stages (professionals aged 40 onwards).

The findings of this study provide conclusive recommendations to bridge the "career intentionality" gap between the genders. The insights drawn also have pointers toward enabling the younger generations in the workforce adopt the intentionality models used by corporate leaders to etch their success sagas in order to ensure their own professional success. This is a pre-requisite for inclusive growth; a priority for the country's economic progress. While the structure of the career paths etched might continue to be significantly different between the

Figure 1. The Career Intentionality Model (CIM)

CAREER MOTIVATORS
Corporate Leader
Political Leader
Social Activist
Actor
Others
None

CAREER ORIENTATIONS
Career Primary
Home & Career
Home Primary

CAREER INFLUENCERS
Parents
Spouse
In-laws
Boss
Friend
Mentor
Other

CAREER ASPIRATIONS
Advancement in organisational hierarchy
Job Security
Professional expertise
Work life integration
Opportunity to share learnings
Opportunity to mentor others

CAREER DRIVERS
Breadwinner of the family
To meet financial goal for family
To meet financial goal for self
Career Achievement
Use skills for common good

genders, the intent and the outcomes should ideally be only marginally different; young men and women at the threshold of their careers should be equally equipped to dream big, with intention driving their career goals.

The Career Intentionality Model (CIM)

The Figure 1 illustrates the Career Intentionality Model that this research was structured around.

(1) Career Orientation : On the basis of the orientation of an individual with respect to his/her career and home, the professional may be classified as:

(i) Career Primary: A career primary individual is ambitious and focused with a strong achievement orientation and career planning. Family needs are secondary to career goals. He/she is either single by choice or has a clear understanding with her/his spouse / family on placing the career first. This individual does not anticipate taking any breaks in career.

(ii) Career & Home : A career-and-home individual has an abiding interest in pursuing a career, but treats it as equal and sometimes secondary to family responsibilities. This individual is curtailed by traditional views about child care / lack of day care systems and is prone to taking career breaks in response to family requirements. He/she is keen on re-entering the workplace after family responsibilities are fulfilled.

(iii) Home Primary : This individual works, but is not career-focused. His/her career is treated as completely

secondary to family responsibilities. It is pursued due to the presence of a 'stressor' at home. The 'stressor' could be family's /self's temporary or semi-permanent monetary requirements or a social condition. The home-primary individual views his/her work as a series of 'jobs' and not as a congruent career and might leave the workplace permanently when the 'stressor' is removed.

(2) Career Motivators : The career motivators are individuals who inspire IWPs and IMPs and whom they idolize. The success of these role models is what professionals wish to emulate. The most popular motivators are corporate leaders, political leaders, social activists, or actors. They are essentially a part of the socio, cultural, and political environment of an individual's upbringing.

(3) Career Drivers : Career drivers are the factors that drive a professional to the career front. From being a breadwinner of the family to attaining financial goals for self and family to career achievement and putting one's skills and education to good use, the drivers are significantly different for every individual, more so when they belong to different genders.

(4) Career Aspirations : Career aspirations refer to the tangible (or intangible) milestones a professional aims to achieve through his/her career. The most common career aspirations are advancement in an organization's hierarchy, ensuring job security, gaining professional expertise, striking work life balance, being handed opportunities to share learnings, and mentor those who seek help. Career aspirations are influenced by factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, race, parents' occupation and educational level, and parental expectations (Domenico & Jones, 2006).

(5) Career Influencers : The parameters of an individual's professional and social ecosystem that influences his/her career intentionality and aid career progress are the career influencers. They are support networks a professional avails of while pursuing his/her career. Parents, siblings, spouse, and in-laws are familial career influencers, while others on a professional's personal and professional network - boss/mentor/friend, and so forth also act as agents of career influence.

(6) Career Trajectory : The career trajectories of professionals were determined by their career continuities and career growths across the three active career stages.
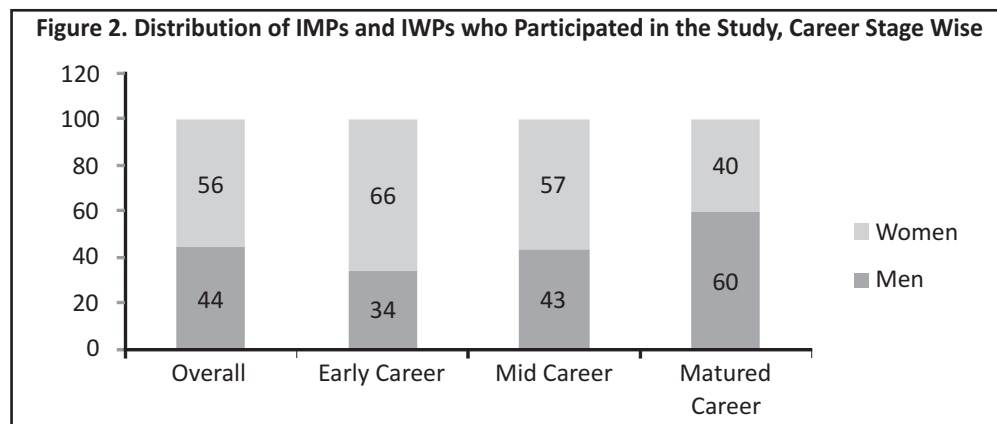
(7) Career Continuity : This parameter refers to the extent to which a professional's career is continuous without incidents of interruptions. Greater continuity would mean that the professional applied greater intention to chart his/her career trajectory. Disruptions were most often proactively averted and aspiration for career progress ensured 'break free' careers. They are significantly impacted by career influencers and motivators.

(8) Career Growth : The progress of an employee's career in terms of his/her professional achievements and milestones is called career growth. This is an outcome of intentional career planning and is impacted by career influencers. This parameter can be quantified by the extent to which a professional has gone up the corporate ladder during his/her career span.

Research Methodology

Following extensive brainstorming and focus group discussions, the Career Intentionality Model (CIM) in its entirety was designed by our research wing. Next, a questionnaire addressing all the different aspects of the CIM

Figure 2. Distribution of IMPs and IWPs who Participated in the Study, Career Stage Wise

Career Stage	Men	Women
Overall	44	56
Early Career	34	66
Mid Career	43	57
Matured Career	60	40

Table 1. Percentages of IWPs (Indian Women Professionals) and IMPs (Indian Men Professionals) - Nature of Work Across Career Stages

Nature of work	Early Stage		Mid Stage		Matured Stage	
	IWP	IMP	IWP	IMP	IWP	IMP
Full time corporate careers	94 %	90%	77%	84%	67%	69%
Part time working	0%	0%	2%	0.3%	1%	0.5%
Independent consultants	1%	1%	1%	0.2%	7%	4%
On Career breaks	0%	0%	2%	0.5%	4%	0.5%
Others	5%	9%	18%	15%	21%	26%

and that required professionals to share details of their career journey on the basis of the models they used at the three active career stages was developed. The survey also contained basic demographic questions on a professional's socio, economic, and educational backgrounds. Amongst the socio factors were his/her nativity, family structure, parents' work profile (current or pre-retirement), marital status, spouse's work profile, and so forth. Some of the educational factors are his/her educational qualifications and exposure received while in college. Amongst the economic factors were his/her personal income, family's economic background, spouse's work status, and so forth.

The survey was hosted on an online platform and many organizations keen on understanding the gender induced differences in career intentionality in their workforce circulated it, and partnered in the study. The study was launched in October 2014 and ran for a period of five months, up until February 2015. The responses were consequently used to trace the variability of the career intentionality basis gender and career stage and furnish the significant findings that have several business implications.

✤ **Respondent Specifics :** A total of 2456 Indian professionals took the survey. Out of these, 44% were men and 56% were women. While 28% of the professionals were in the early career stage, 54% were in the mid career stage, and 18% were in the matured career stage. The Figure 2 depicts the distribution of IWPs and IMPs across career stages who were part of the survey. The distribution of IWPs and IMPs across career stages according to their nature of work is depicted in the Table 1.

✤ **Business Case for a Gender Neutral Career Intentionality Model :** Wittenberg - Cox (2010) said, "Women are not yet natives of the business world. They are like second-generation immigrants, with one foot in the culture of business and one foot in the culture of 'women'" (p.224). This statement is indicative of the obvious differences

in the career intentionality models of men and women professionals and exposes the disproportionate gender representation in many organizations' workforce. Why is it important that these gaps be bridged? What are the business benefits that equally intentional men and women professionals can bring to an organization? Why is it important that professionals in their earlier years take cues from intentionality models their role models used? Let us attempt to answer these.

Since career aspiration is a major driving force in a woman's career development, continued research on women's career aspirations and career development is necessary to explain their occupational paths (Ming, Ahmad, & Ismail, n.d.). According to Barsh and Yee (2012), "Leaders should focus on their middle managers, creating opportunities that would encourage women to accelerate their professional growth on a course to the top, overcoming barriers that companies, and women themselves, put in the way" (p.1).

Improving the career intentionality of women professionals can also result in lowering their attrition rates, consequently increasing the diversity of the workforce. Research shows that investing time and effort in women's employment (a part of which is improving their career intentionality) has a lot of advantages. An increased number of women in the workforce imply that India's GDP could go up by as much as 27%, per capita income could go up by as much as 20% by 2030 (Aguirre, Hoteit, Rupp, & Sabbagh, 2012). The skill diversity of the workforce is enhanced as also its productivity. In a world where most businesses are increasingly becoming customer driven, a workforce that better matches their customers' demographics can help organizations service their customers better (Barsh & Yee, 2012). According to Badal (2014), "Men and women have different viewpoints, ideas, and market insights, which enables better problem solving and hence, gender diversity should be the norm" (p.1).

Yet, another research commissioned by the Australian Government went on to prove that having a gender diverse workforce had numerous advantages (including but not limited to) (a) attraction and retention of the best employees, (b) reduced cost of staff turnover, (c) enhanced organizational performance, (d) improved access to target markets, (e) minimum legal risks, and (f) enhanced reputation (Turner, 2015).

To quote Hillary Rodham Clinton, former U.S. Secretary of State : "When it comes to the enormous challenge of our time - to systematically and relentlessly pursue more economic opportunity in our lands - we don't have a person to waste, and we certainly don't have a gender to waste." (as cited in Lemmon, 2011, para 4).

In short, investing in improving women's career intentionality to equal that of men (and that of successful professional women) can bring in economic and social prosperity and can ensure inclusive growth.
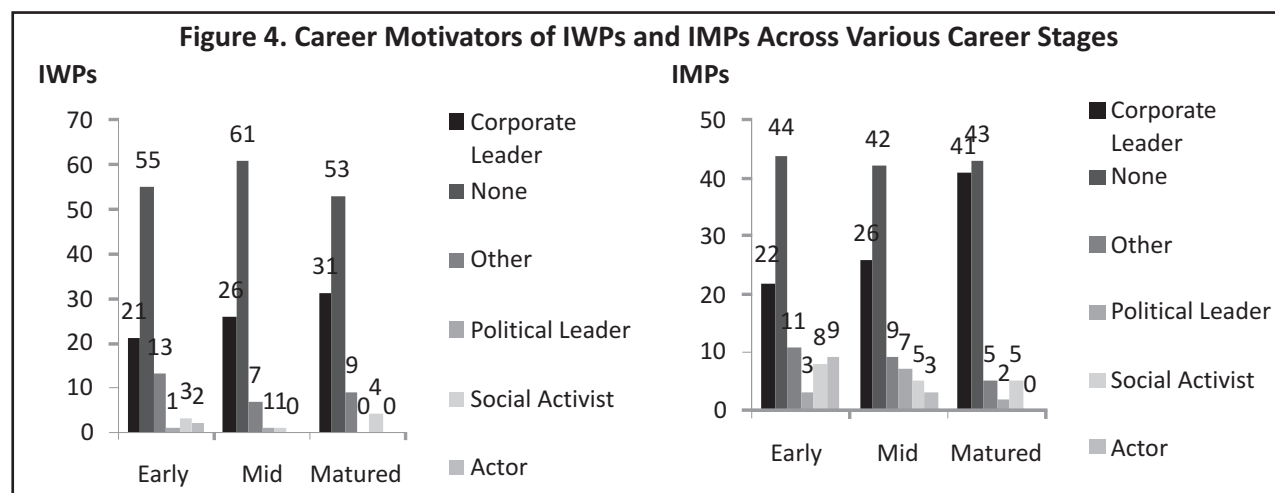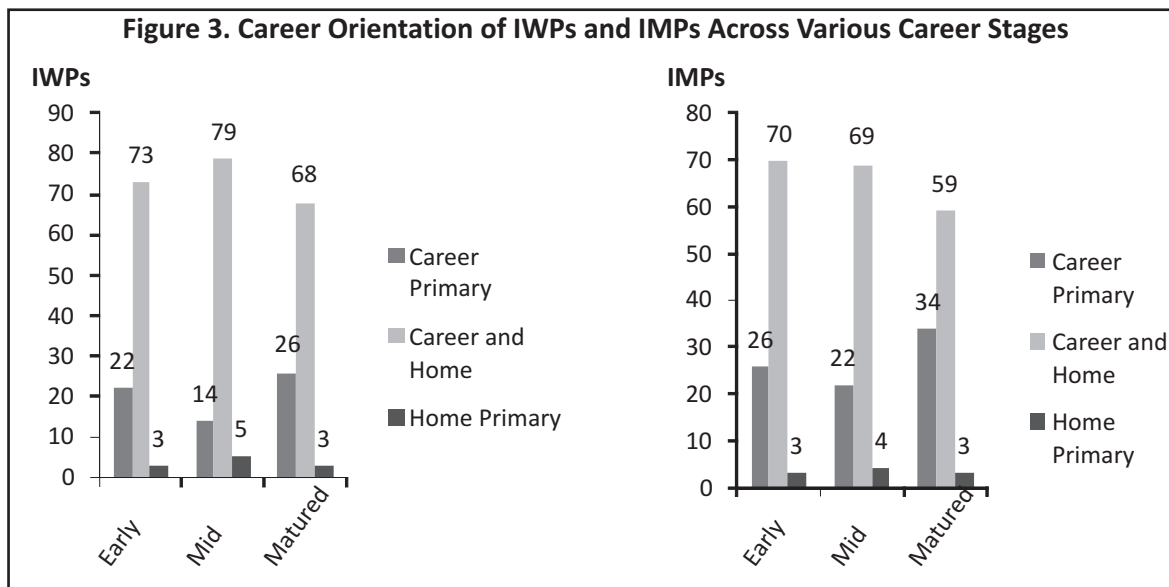
Hypotheses

The research was formulated and executed against the backdrop of four different hypotheses around the Career Intentionality Models (CIM) used by Indian Women Professionals (IWPs) and Indian Men Professionals (IMPs), which were to be established/disproved by the analyses of responses. They hypotheses are :

(1) Hypothesis 1: The CIMs used by IWPs and IMPs of today are identical.

(2) Hypothesis 2: The professionals in the early career stage and mid career stage today use the same CIMs that professionals currently at the matured stage used during their early and mid stages.

(3) Hypothesis 3: The 'career trajectories' of IWPs and IMPs are identical in structure.

(4) Hypothesis 4: The organizations that matured and professionally successful individuals of today work/worked with played a critical role in their career growths.

Analysis and Results

In this section, we present in great detail the significant findings that emerged out of analyses of the responses.

Figure 3. Career Orientation of IWPs and IMPs Across Various Career Stages

IWPs

	Early	Mid	Matured
Career Primary	22	14	26
Career and Home	73	79	68
Home Primary	3	5	3

IMPs

	Early	Mid	Matured
Career Primary	26	22	34
Career and Home	70	69	59
Home Primary	3	4	3

Figure 4. Career Motivators of IWPs and IMPs Across Various Career Stages

IWPs

	Early	Mid	Matured
Corporate Leader	21	26	31
None	55	61	53
Other	13	7	9
Political Leader	1	1	0
Social Activist	3	1	4
Actor	2	0	0

IMPs

	Early	Mid	Matured
Corporate Leader	22	26	41
None	44	42	43
Other	11	9	5
Political Leader	3	7	2
Social Activist	8	5	5
Actor	9	3	0

Data in accordance with each of the hypotheses was collated and inferences are drawn.

★ **Hypothesis 1: The CIMs used by IWPs and IMPs of today are identical.**

(1) Career Orientation : The Figure 3 depicts the career orientations that IWPs and IMPs at various career stages have. From the results, it is evident that IWPs and IMPs in the early and mid stages are more 'career and home' than in the advanced stages. For women, the 'career and home' orientation peaks in the mid stage (79% as against 73% and 68% at early and matured stages), possibly because they are more likely to be responsible for their families and also grow in their careers during this stage. It is interesting to note that negligible percentages of men and women are 'home primary' at any given career stage, indicating greater intentionality in the workforce today. *Hence, the most popular career orientation for both IMPs and IWPs at any given career stage is 'career and home'.*

(2) Career Motivators : The Figure 4 illustrates the role 'career motivators' play in inspiring IWPs and IMPs. A vast majority of IWPs and IMPs at all the three active career stages do not have a career motivator/role model. The

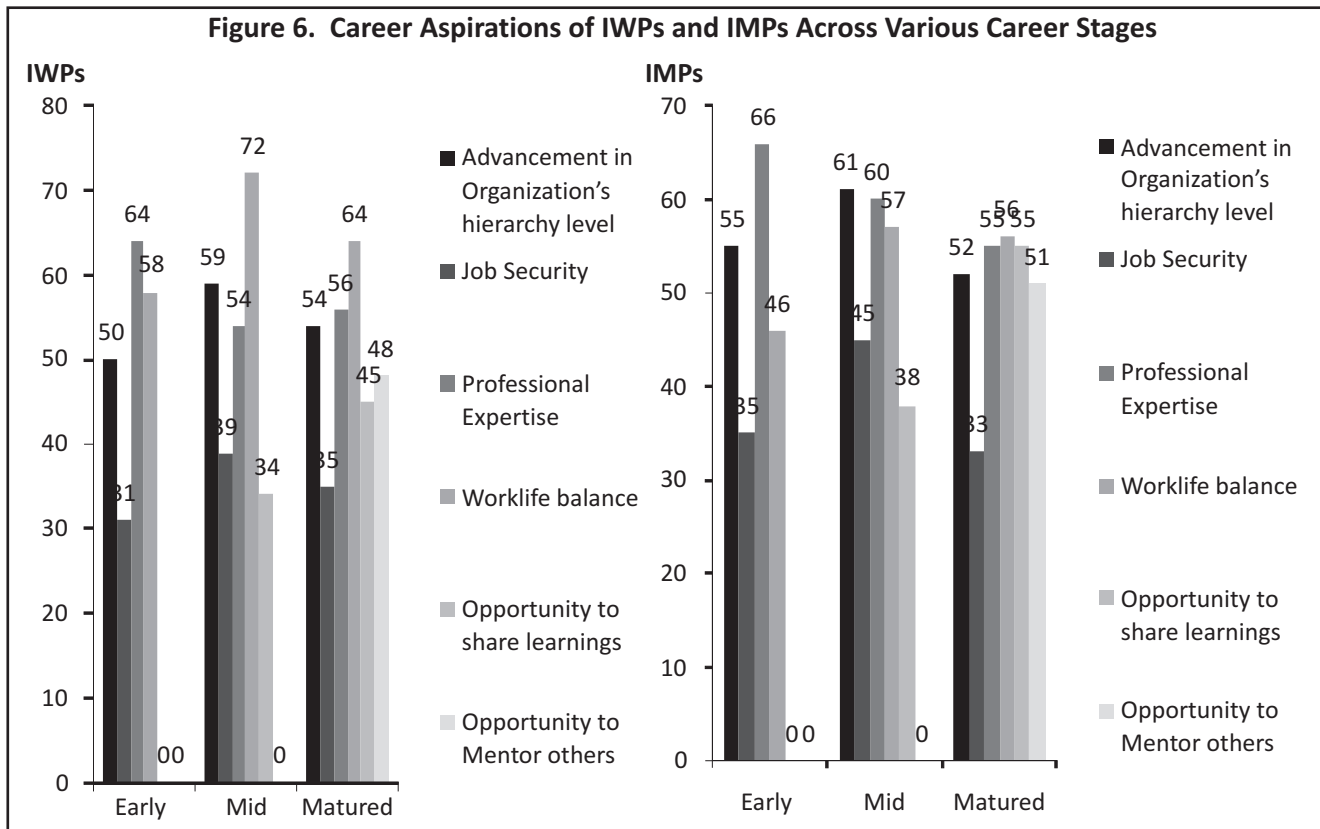**Figure 5. Career Drivers of IWPs and IMPs Across Various Career Stages**
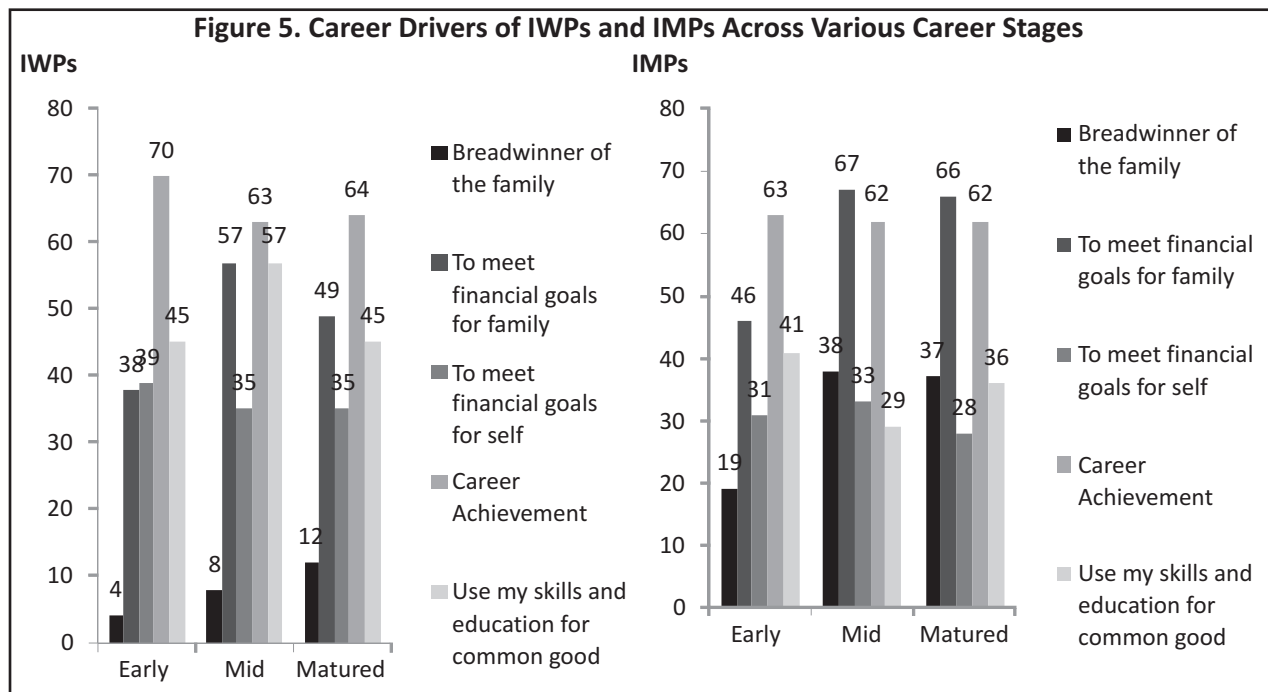
percentages of men and women who idolize corporate leaders increase across the stages (from 21% to 26% to 31% in IWPs and 22% to 26% to 41% in IMPs). There are more matured career IMPs as against matured career IWPs who have corporate leaders as role models, indicating that women at matured stages have fewer women leaders to look up to. *Hence, men and women acknowledged having role models more in the advanced career stages than in the earlier career stages.*

(3) Career Drivers : The Figure 5 illustrates the transition of career drivers. When compared to IMPs, IWPs show a greater drive for career achievement at any given stage (for e.g., 70% of the women felt so in the early stage as compared to 63% of men). For men, meeting financial goals for the family assumes supreme importance in the mid and matured stages. Furthermore, more women than men pursue careers to meet their own financial goals; the percentages of men who are breadwinners of their families almost double as men move from early to mid and matured stages (a 19% to 38% jump). *Hence, while career achievement is the most important career driver for men only in the early stage, it is so for IWPs in all the three active career stages.*
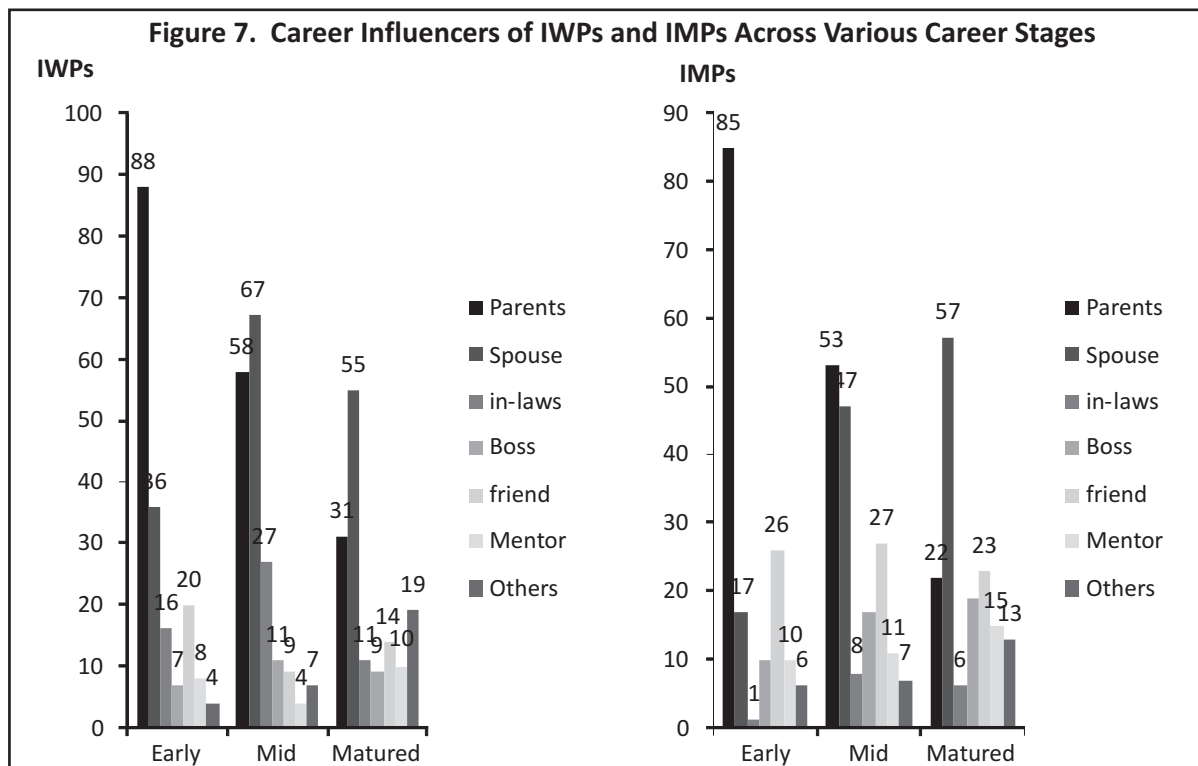
(4) Career Aspirations : From the Figure 6, it may be understood that as IWPs move from early to mid, work life integration becomes paramount to them (72% of IWPs in the mid stage vouch for work life integration); IMPs are able to retain their aspirations for advancement in organizational hierarchy during this transition (55% of men in the early stages aspire for career growth and 61% of men in mid stage aspire so). However, to a majority of matured career IMPs (56%), work life balance is important after which comes the opportunity to share learnings. Almost half of both men and women in the matured career stage do want to mentor their juniors. *Hence, majority of IWPs and IMPs at the early stage aspire to gain professional expertise; however, as women move on, work-life balance becomes more significant to them, while for men, career growth becomes a priority.*

(5) Career Influencers : From the Figure 7, it is clear that parents influence the career intentionality of both IMPs and IWPs significantly in the early stage. As women move from early to mid, spousal support becomes more important to them (from 36% to 67%). It is also understood that women in the mid career stage rely less on

Figure 6. Career Aspirations of IWPs and IMPs Across Various Career Stages

IWPs

Legend:
- Advancement in Organization's hierarchy level
- Job Security
- Professional Expertise
- Worklife balance
- Opportunity to share learnings
- Opportunity to Mentor others

IMPs

Figure 7. Career Influencers of IWPs and IMPs Across Various Career Stages

IWPs

Legend:
- Parents
- Spouse
- in-laws
- Boss
- friend
- Mentor
- Others

IMPs

Table 2. CIMs of IWPs and IMPs Across the Three Career Stages

Career Stage	IWP					IMP				
	Career Orientation	Career Motivator	Career Driver	Career Aspirations	Career Influencer	Career Orientation	Career Motivator	Career Driver	Career Aspirations	Career Influencer
Early	Home and Career	None	Career Achievement	Professional expertise	Parents	Home and Career	None	Career	Professional Achievement	Parents expertise
Mid	Home and Career	None	**Career Achievement**	**Work life balance**	**Spouse**	Home and Career	None	**To meet financial goals for family**	**Advancement in organizational hierarchy**	**Parents**
Mature	Home and Career	None	**Career Achievement**	Work life balance	Spouse	Home and Career	None	**To meet financial goals for family**	Work life balance	Spouse

external support networks (boss/friend/mentor/others), and more on familial support. IMPs in the mid stage more actively seek out mentors as against IWPs (only 4% of women seek mentoring; 11% of men do so). Friends influence a quarter of men's careers at all the three stages; for IWPs, this influence is significant only in the early stage (20%). A considerable number of IWPs (27%) are in avail of in-laws's support during the mid stage; 58% of the IWPs at the mid stage said their parents supported them. Such family-based support systems (a derivative of the Indian joint family system) act as very important career enablers for women at the mid stage; childcare and other household responsibilities are taken care of the career influencers, thereby paving the way for career progress. *Hence, while familial influencers are important to men, external networks have a greater influence on men than women.*

CIM: Comparative Analysis

The most popular CIM used by professionals at each stage was derived by collating the most popular and common career orientation, motivator, driver, aspiration, and influencer they used/had at that particular career stage. The Table 2 shows the same. The following inferences may be made:

(1) IWPs and IMPs at the early stage use identical CIMs.

(2) When at the mid stage, IWPs are driven more by career achievement ; whereas, IMPs are more intent on meeting the financial goals of the family. The most popular career aspiration for women is work life balance ; men tend to aspire for career advancement. If organizations are to address the work-life integration needs of women at the mid stage, their drive for career achievement may be translated to career growth.

(3) The societal pressure on IMPs to earn is evident, with IMPs at matured stage being driven to careers to fulfill the financial goals of the family; majority of the IWPs are intent on career achievement at this stage.

Thus, we may conclude that the Hypothesis 1 is rejected. While the hypothesis is found to be true in the early career stage, the career intentionality drivers of mid and matured career IWPs and IMPs are different.

★ **Hypothesis 2: The professionals in the early career stage and mid career stage today use the same CIMs that professionals currently at the matured stage used during their early and mid stages.**

The Tables 3 and 4 compare the CIMs used by professionals of today (at early and mid stages) against those used by matured career professionals (men and women) at their early and mid career stages.

Table 3. CIM: IWPs at Early and Mid Stages vs Matured Career IWPs (at Early and Mid Stages)

Career Stage	IWPs					Matured career IWPs				
	Career Orientation	Career Motivator	Career Driver	Career Aspirations	Career Influencer	Career Orientation	Career Motivator	Career Driver	Career Aspirations	Career Influencer
Early	Home and Career	None	Career Achievement	Professional expertise	Parents	Home and Career	None	Career Achievement	Professional expertise	Parents
Mid	Home and Career	None	Career Achievement	**Work life balance**	Spouse	Home and Career	None	Career Achievement	**Professional expertise**	Spouse

Table 4. CIM: IMPs at Early and Mid Stages vs Matured Career IMPs (at Early and Mid Stages)

Career Stage	IMPs					Matured career IMPs				
	Career Orientation	Career Motivator	Career Driver	Career Aspirations	Career Influencer	Career Orientation	Career Motivator	Career Driver	Career Aspirations	Career Influencer
Early	**Home and Career**	**None**	Career Achievement	Professional expertise	Parents	**Career Primary**	**Corporate Leader**	Career Achievement	Professional expertise	Parents
Mid	**Home and Career**	**None**	To meet financial goals for family	Advancement in organizational hierarchy	**Parents**	**Career Primary**	**Corporate Leader**	To meet financial goals for family	Advancement in organizational hierarchy	**Spouse**

The following inferences can be made from the Table 3 :

(i) Today's early career IWPs use the same CIM that matured career IWPs used during their early stage.

(ii) At the mid stage, while today's IWPs aspire for greater WLB, the matured career IWPs aspired for gaining greater professional expertise, implying greater intentionality. It may be concluded that efforts need to be made by women to address their work life balance and focus on gaining greater professional expertise.

From the Table 4, we can draw the following inferences:

(i) Career orientations of today's early career and mid career IMPs are primarily 'home and career' as against the 'career primary' orientation that matured career IMPs had during their early and mid stages. This shows that work life integration needs of men have become more prominent over the years.

(ii) While today's early career IMPs do not have a significant career motivator, their predecessors had corporate leaders as their role models, implying greater career focus and intentionality.

(iii) While majority of mid career men continue to be supported by their parents, more matured career men at their mid stages had spousal support. This could imply that the age at which men typically married have gone up with time or that a larger number of mid career men today have wives who are also gainfully employed and hence, cannot support their spouses as wives who are homemakers can.

Hence, the Hypothesis 2 also stands rejected. This may be because professionals are increasingly intent over work life integration today and the career and family patterns have also changed over the years.

★ **Hypothesis 3: The 'Career Trajectories' of IWPs and IMPs are identical in structure.**

The career trajectory of IWPs and IMPs were sketched with respect to their career growths and career continuity.

(1) Career Continuity : Researchers world over have shown that career patterns of men and women are significantly different; career interruptions are relatively more common in women's professional career

Figure 8. Career Continuities of IWPs and IMPs Across Various Career Stages

From the Figure 8, we can infer :
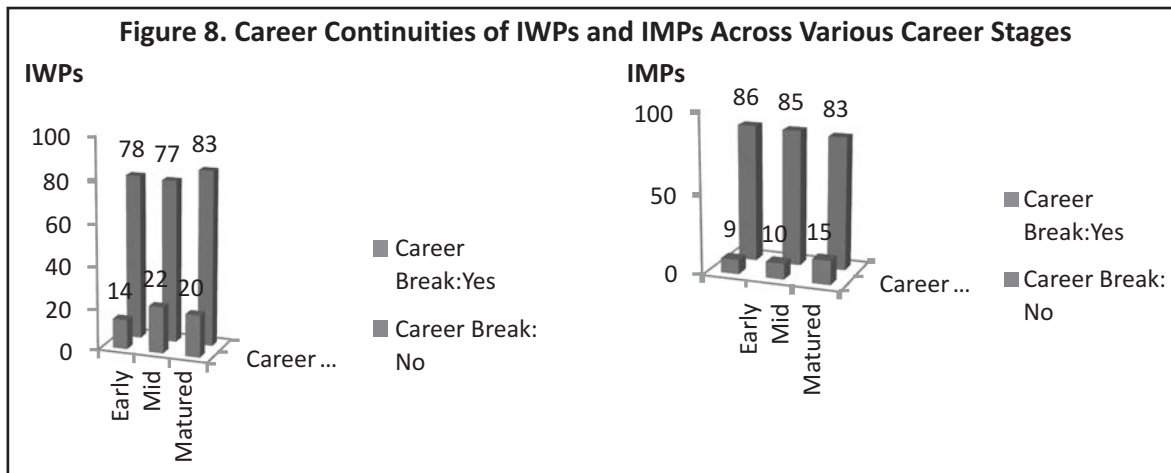
trajectory when compared to that of men. Due to the continuing existence of gender roles in our society, and women continuing to be responsible for the bulk of the household chores and caretaking, women find themselves taking career breaks when the juggling pressure weighs them down. With work arrangements that guarantee autonomy over schedules beyond the reach of most IWPs, many women off-ramp. Though there are almost 1.8 million Indian women wanting to make comebacks, the on-ramping is a tougher process, with many organizations choosing to neglect the huge talent pool that second career women comprise.

From the Figure 8, we can infer :

(i) The tendency for career interruptions is higher amongst women when compared to men, irrespective of the career stage they are at.

(ii) The percentages of IWPs who take career breaks increases from early to mid stages and goes down once again as IWPs progress to matured career stages. The tendency for career break is highest amongst IWPs at the mid stage - the career stage when juggling professional and personal commitments tend to weigh them down.

Figure 9. Career Growths of IWPs and IMPs Across Various Career Stages
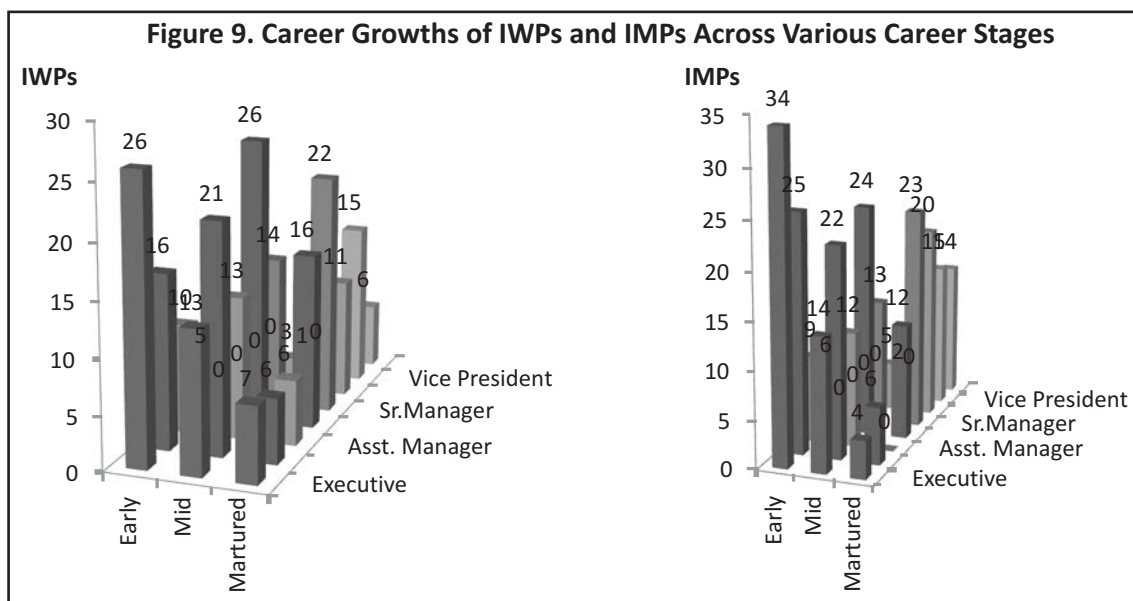
Table 5. Organizational Support for Career Intentionality of IWPs and IMPs across Career Stages

Career Stage	Matured Career IWP		Matured Career IMP	
	Organizational Culture	Organizational Initiative	Organizational Culture	Organizational Initiative
Early	Values Diversity & Inclusion	Flexible Working Arrangements	Values Diversity & Inclusion	Flexible Working Arrangements
Mid	Values Diversity & Inclusion	Flexible Working Arrangements	Values Diversity & Inclusion	Flexible Working Arrangements
Now (Matured)	Values Diversity & Inclusion	Flexible Working Arrangements	Values Diversity & Inclusion	Flexible Working Arrangements

(iii) As for the IMPs, the percentage of men taking breaks go up with the career stage they are at. This could be because IMPs take career breaks for reasons different from that of IWPs and with greater financial security that advancement of career provides, they show a greater tendency for career breaks.

(2) Career Growth : Career progress refers to the hierarchical growth that a professional achieved over the three phases of his/her career. The advancement was quantified by the salary level a professional is at and the designation he/she held while on a particular stage. There has been substantial evidence to prove that while men with career aspirations and the necessary skills most often find their way to the top, there is a significant drain of women along the talent pipeline. Advancement thus, is a direct function of a professional's gender, an outcome of his/her career intentionality and determined to a great extent by the career influencers/motivators that a professional encountered in his/her journey.

The Figure 9 has the following implications:

(i) There are fewer IWPs at work levels general manager and above at the matured career stages, when compared to IMPs.

(ii) Many women in the matured career stages are still at junior work levels (executive to manager position) ; the concentration of men at these work levels is negligible in the matured stage.

Hence, the Hypothesis 3 stands rejected. The career trajectory patterns of men and women professionals are drastically different.

★ **Hypotheses 4: The organizations that matured and professionally successful individuals of today work/worked with played a critical role in their career growths.**

From the Table 5, it may be understood that irrespective of the career stage they are at, a vast majority of both IWPs and IMPs work with organizations that value diversity and inclusion and have several initiatives to this end, the foremost being flexible working arrangements. Therefore, the Hypothesis 4 is accepted. It is proven that organizational support is critical in the career growths of matured career professionals of today.

A comparative analysis with previously conducted studies are depicted in the Tables 6 and 7.

Managerial Implications

The consolidated findings have several implications for managers of organizations keen on becoming gender sensitive and maintaining gender balance. In order to help professionals sustain their career intentionality and translate it to career growth, managers can:

✎ In the capacity of bosses and mentors, initiate and nurture mentoring opportunities in order to enable

Table 6. Comparative Analysis 1

Study 1 - Our Study	Study of Malloy (2013)	Remarks
Women do not actively seek mentoring or career advice from their bosses or mentors as against men.	Women are less deliberate than men in their career progressions, thinking, "I will learn, grow, and build my capabilities," rather than, "I will create opportunities to learn X and gain experience in Y to get to position Z" (Malloy, 2013).	The findings support the 'same truth' that women are less intentional about their careers than men.
Majority of mid career women aspire for work life balance.	Women tend to hesitate when offered promotions because they didn't expect them, felt unprepared, or needed time to address work-life considerations (Malloy, 2013).	Work life integration is paramount to women in both an Indian and a global context.
Both men and women in the matured career stage are almost equally intent on the opportunity to mentor others (51% of IMPs and 48% of IWPs) (Please refer Fig.7).	Women managers tend to shy away from mentoring and hide family and "feminine" aspects of work-life balance.	The findings of this study suggest that in an Indian context, senior leaders, irrespective of gender, aspire to be mentors. This could be because the current Indian women leaders have braved many work-life integration issues to reach their current positions and hence, want to give back the lessons learnt to their successors.
More women than men aspire for career achievement in the mid and matured career stages. Men tend to aspire for meeting financial goals of the family at these stages (Please refer CIMs in Table 2).	Like their male counterparts, the highest-performing women had in common a strong orientation toward achievement (Malloy, 2013).	As per this study, women are more achievement oriented than men while men tend to pursue financial goals. This could be because of the high societal expectations from Indian men to earn and satisfy the financial goals of their families.

professionals' career planning. This is especially relevant for women professionals on whose careers, bosses and mentors were found to have minimalistic influence.

✎ Address the work-life integration needs of professionals. For IWPs, this is the most important career aspiration at the mid-stage, which when not satisfied, might result in talented women dropping of the workforce. It may be noted that the majority of women in the mid stage cite 'career achievement' as their main career driver, as against their male counterparts who seem to favour 'meeting financial goals for family'. Furthermore, when compared to the current matured career IMPs, the mid and the early career IMPs show a greater aspiration for work-life balance and work flexibility, which means organizational support for this has to be enhanced for both genders.

✎ Advocate 'Diversity & Inclusion' initiatives. Men and women, irrespective of the career stage they are at, value an organizational culture that promotes D&I (Diversity & Inclusion in Asia Network, 2011).

✎ Become gender bilingual (Wittenberg-Cox, 2012) in order to identify the distinct enablers. It requires to promote intentionality of careers in both men and women.

✎ Conduct leadership workshops catering to specific needs of leaders from both the genders.

✎ Cultivate an organizational culture devoid of biases on the basis of gender, race, age, rank, and so forth, and in which professionals of both genders compete with each other in a competitive yet healthy environment.

✎ Create and promote role models (being one themselves) whose success can inspire the younger lot of professional men and women. The study found that the percentages of IWPs and IMPs in the threshold of their

Table 7. Comparative Analysis 2

Our Study	Study of Noonan et al. (2008)	Remarks
Over 70% of women at any given career stage have a 'career and home' orientation. 70% and 69% of early and mid career men also have a 'career and home orientation'. With matured career men, the percentage is slightly lower at 59% (Please refer Fig.3).	Roughly the same percentage of men (75%) and women (73%) defined success for themselves as being based equally on their career and their life outside of work (Noonan, McGowan, & Licina, 2008).	Both studies suggest that majority of both men and women professionals value the balance they are able to strike between their careers and life outside it. While the second study also was done on professionals aged between 25 and 54 yrs, the percentages are on the overall sample as against a stage wise segregation we do.
Amongst the mid and matured career professionals, 67% and 55% of women and 47% and 57% of men said their spouse's support significantly contributed to their career advancements (Please refer Fig.8).	About half of both men and women said that their spouse or life partner was the person who helped them most significantly in advancing their careers (Noonan, McGowan, & Licina, 2008).	Spousal support in career advancement of Indian professionals as per this study is at par with that of the U.S. based study it is compared with.
Only 8%, 4%, and 10% of women and 10%, 11%, and 15% of men at early, mid, and matured stages, respectively felt that mentors were significant career influencers (Please refer Fig.8).	The same percentage of men and women (36%) credited a mentor at work as the most helpful (Noonan, McGowan, & Licina, 2008).	While comparing the support men and women received from mentors, it may be noted that the percentages are far lesser in the Indian context. This shows that Indian professionals need to be more aggressive of career pursuits and actively seek mentoring.
More men than women felt that their friends/peer groups were career influencers ; 20%, 9%, and 14% of women and 27%, 26%, and 23% of men at early, mid, and matured stages, respectively felt that friends were significant career influencers (Please refer figure 8).	More women than men named a colleague/peer (44 vs. 35%) (Noonan, McGowan, & Licina, 2008).	As the findings of this study suggest, Indian women professionals are not as benefitted by men in their career advancements by their friends. This is in contrast with the findings of the second study. This could be because Indian women tend to dissociate themselves from peer networks as they move ahead in life (probably after marriage due to spousal relocation) and hence, are not able to derive benefits.

careers inspired by corporate role models were very few and far in between.

Recommendations

Concerted efforts of organizations and professionals involved are required to manage and bridge the gender gap in career intentionality. The efforts themselves need to be intentional with the larger objective of achieving gender equality. From the significant findings this study provided, we have deduced a few recommendations for the benefit of organizations, which are keen on D&I initiatives and individuals who are intent on career planning.

Indian Women Professionals (IWPs) :

✎ Have a career plan earlier on in your career.

✎ Actively seek career influencers (non familial support systems like boss/mentor/friend) and invest time, effort, and money if and when necessary.

✎ In the event of an inevitable career break, keep alive your intentionality to comeback; stay connected.

Indian Men Professionals (IMPs) :

↻ Enroll for formal programmes to enhance prospects of career progress.

↻ Revisit your primary career intentionality drivers periodically and evaluate them on the basis of your abilities to ensure work-family integration.

↻ Actively seek mentoring.

↻ Be supportive of the cause of women's career intentionality (spouse/sister/mother/colleague/daughter/ friend).

Conclusion

It was found that Indian men of today have a 'career and home' orientation towards their careers, a welcome shift from the 'career primary' orientation that Indian men professionals of the previous generations had. Another key finding is that Indian women professionals are more intent than men on career achievement at any given career stage, indicating the greater professionalism women today aspire for. Monetary needs drive more men towards careers than women, proving that men are expected to don the 'breadwinner role' more often than women; women, as they progress across career stages, give greater importance to making money. While work-life balance becomes the most important career aspiration for women at the mid and matured stages, it is men in the matured stages to whom this is more important than professional advancement or gaining expertise.

Men exhibit a greater tendency to seek the support of career influencers outside their families (boss/ friend/ mentor), while women prefer to seek help from home. It is also interesting to find that more men and women in their early career stages preferred to not have a role model, the tendency to idolize a leader rose with age. The career growth rate of men is greater as compared to women; there are fewer women in the matured career stages holding senior-level executive positions (GM, VP, CXO, and above). While the percentages of men who took career breaks increased with the career stage they were at, for women, this peaked at the mid level and fell as women broke the notorious glass ceiling and progressed to matured career stages.

The study also shows that men are more likely than women to seek mentoring, showing greater intent on career planning. It is a revelation that more men than women changed jobs for want of better job opportunities. This goes on to show that though women too aspire for career advancement, they are bound by various responsibilities outside of work, and they are deeply committed to jobs that respect their need for work-life integration.

The findings show that career intentionality, when guided by positive career goals and influenced by appropriate career motivators and influencers, can serve as ladders for a professional's career growth irrespective of gender, assuring career continuity. Biases and stereotypes are to be discarded; organizations are to actively promote mentoring, invest on creating and nurturing role models, improvise on work-life integration initiatives, and become gender bilingual to nurture the intentionality of men and women on their rolls. Men and women have to let go off all self-imposed inhibitors to career growth and work towards the enablement of their career aspirations. Gender balance and equality would then be a reality.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

This study was conducted on a population of professionals currently in active career on any of the three listed career stages. The Career Intentionality Models of 'to-be professionals,' who are soon to join the workforce as also that of entrepreneurs, do not come under the purview of the present study. The study has implications only in an Indian context and will have to be tailored to address a global audience.
Correlating the 'Career Intentionality Model' to a professional's socio, economic, and educational profile, which can help unveil causal patterns behind a professional's choice of CIM calls for our immediate attention. This

could also bring to forth the gender differential in the career intentionality of professionals with similar profiles. Furthermore, in the pipeline is the design of a psychometric tool that can quantitatively assess a professional's career intentionality on the basis of the skills he/she has built and the efforts he/she has applied over time and suggests a scope for improvement on the basis of statistically successful models.

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