Engineering careers to enhance organizational commitment among employees in the IT industry

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Abstract. Organizations are facing tremendous pressure to enhance employee commitment and retain them in the organization. Among various factors that affect Organizational commitment, career anchors are seen as the prominent factor. It is then seen pertinent to identify the dominant and supporting career anchor that affects their commitment in organization which would help design relevant interventions to support the same. The objective of the study is to explore the relation between career anchors (as measured by Career Orientation Inventory) and Organizational commitment (as measured by Organizational Commitment Questionnaire). A survey was conducted among 100 employees working at information technology companies in India with variations in age, hierarchical levels and gender. Results of the study can be used to design appropriate workplace interventions to enhance career orientation of employees and thereby increase their commitment towards the organization.

1. INTRODUCTION
In today’s growing era of technology employees gain a lot of job opportunities in the market and hence it becomes difficult for the IT (Information Technology) organizations to manage and retain employees. Supporting to this there has been substantial research that has been going on for the past 20 years [1], [2], [3]. IT organizations invest heavily on their human resources in the form of recruitment, training & development and employee engagement but organizations fail to understand that the career needs of an individual employee may vary and it can influence on their career decision and their willingness to work for the organization[4], [5]. Career anchors are the key determinants of the individual’s career choices that they make inside or outside the organization [4]. Career anchors help in understanding the long term needs of the individuals and measure the achievements or goals that they accomplish to fulfil their career choices.

Study on career anchors can also help organization understand the influence of career design over the commitment level of an employee [6]. In this study we try to find the influence of career anchors of the individuals over their organizational commitment. The research made by Meyer & Allen [7] reveals that organizational commitment can be measured through 3 dimensions of commitment; they are affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. According to Meyer, Allen & Smith [8] the commitment shown by an individual varies for individuals and it’s associated with combination of 3 dimensions of commitment.

2. CAREER ANCHORS
According to Schien [1], [9], [10] career anchors can be seen as a self-perceived talents and values that influences a person to take career related decision in their life. Schein in 1978 in his seminal work on career anchors suggested that there are five career anchors that strongly influence the individual’s career choice. They are (1) security and stability (2) autonomy and independence (3)
technical/functional competence (4) managerial competence (5) entrepreneurial creativity. In his further research in 1990 he added three more career anchors along with the existing five anchors, namely (6) service or dedication to a cause (7) pure challenge and (8) lifestyle. Schien also proposed that an individual will strongly possess only one among these anchors which strongly influences their career decisions. In relevance to Schien’s [11] findings Feldman and Bolino [5] reframed the 8 career anchors into 3 groups; Talent based anchors, Need based anchors and Value based anchors. Schein [4] in his further research found that an individual career anchor would differ for the same individual in his lifetime. An individual possessing a strong Autonomy/Independence career anchor might evolve into Security/Stability once the same individual gets older. Ituma [12] found that highly skilled labour in IT industry of Nigeria are motivated by a variety of career anchors Quesenberry and Trauth [13] found that an individual might possess more than one career anchors at a particular point in their lifetime. Further research by Quesenberry [14] found that Women working in IT profession show a varied variety of the career anchors which were proposed by Schein [11] and hence recommended that organizations must provide multiple career opportunities for them to have a satisfied career in their life.

3. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Commitment can be defined as the individual’s involvement in the job that they perform in the organization. Commitment can be studied in attitudinal, behavioural or motivational perspective [15]. In our study we will look at organizational commitment in attitude perspective. It can be seen in an attitude perspective because organizational commitment can be seen as a stable mind set of individuals towards the organization [16]. Meyer & Allen’s [7] 3 dimensional model of organizational commitment is used to measure the organizational commitment in this study. They are (1) affective commitment (2) continuance commitment (3) normative commitment. Normative Commitment is seen in employee when they have a high sense of obligation towards the organization. It is the behaviour of the employee to stick on to the current organization even if they feel they are not happy with the current job. Continuance Commitment can be seen when the employee analyses the pros and cons of leaving the organization. It is the behaviour of the employee to weigh the benefits or salary between the current and the new organization. Affective commitment can be defined as a strong emotional attachment of the employee towards the organization and the work they do. This type of commitment can reduce the rate of attrition in the organization.

Figure 1. Relation model of career anchor and organizational commitment
4. RESEARCH PROPOSITION

Research proposition examines the influence of career anchors over organizational commitment among Indian IT employees.

Q1: Does the career anchors impact the organizational commitment among employees in the Indian IT industry?

Prior research has been done to understand the strongest career anchors influencing commitment using Schein [11] model. In this paper we will be studying the influence of Career anchors as grouped by Feldman and Bolino [5] were the career anchors are grouped into talent based anchors, need based anchors and value based anchors and to find out which among these strongly influence the organization commitment. Yousefi, Bebboudi and Zarghamifard [17] found that organizational structure influences the career anchors of the employee and hence the organizations must reduce the structural formation and formalities present within the organization. With that finding in this research we will try to find the influence of the organizational structure over the career anchors

Q2: Does the relation between career anchors and organizational commitment vary pertaining to various employee age groups in the IT industry?

Q3: Does the relation between career anchors and organizational commitment vary pertaining to various hierarchical levels among employees in the Indian IT industry?

Q4: Does the relation between career anchors and organizational commitment vary pertaining to various hierarchical levels among employees in the Indian IT industry?

5. RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a descriptive study. Survey method is used to get the primary data. A set of questionnaire was developed based on the previous studies which is relevant to this study. For measuring Career anchors the seminal work of Edgar Schein [11]; Career Orientation Inventory (COI) was used to collect data. It consists of 40 questions and it measures all 8 career anchors. A 6 point Likert-type scale was used with “6” representing “Always True” and “1” representing “Never True”.

For measuring organizational commitment, the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) designed by Jaros [18] is used. Jaros redesigned Allen & Meyer [16] questionnaire of organizational commitment. It consists of 18 questions and a 7-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree is used.

6. SAMPLING FRAMEWORK

The research and data collection is done in the IT organizations in India.

7. ORGANIZATION PROFILE

The organization has been classified based on their existence in the industry and number of employees working in the current organization

8. RESPONDENTS PROFILE

The Respondents profile has been classified based on Gender, Age and Work Experience.
9. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS
The ranking of the career anchor as per the average rating is seen in the Table 1. Lifestyle is seen as the dominant career anchor influencing the IT professionals. Technical Function is seen as a supportive career anchor. Table 2 shows the ranking of the commitment types as per the average rating given by the respondents. Normative commitment is seen as the dominant commitment type followed by continuance commitment.

**Table 1. Rank wise representation of Career anchors**

| Career Anchors       | Average Rating |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Life Style           | 4.75           |
| Technical Function   | 4.61           |
| Pure Challenge       | 4.59           |
| Service Dedication   | 4.54           |
| Security/ Stability  | 4.45           |
| Entrepreneurial Creativity | 4.43 |
| Autonomy             | 4.39           |
| General Management   | 3.88           |

**Table 2. Rank wise representation of Commitment types**

| Rank | Commitment Types | Average Rating |
|------|------------------|----------------|
| 1    | Normative        | 4.43           |
| 2    | Continuance      | 4.12           |
| 3    | Affective        | 4.08           |

**9.1. Gender Wise**
Table 3 shows the correlation of career anchors and commitment types for Men and Women. From a total of 50 Men respondents it is seen that security and stability has the highest correlation with affective commitment (0.3678). General Managerial career anchor has high correlation with continuance commitment (0.6257) and normative commitment (0.6338). From a total of 50 Women respondents it is seen that security and stability has the highest correlation with affective commitment (0.3715) and service & dedication to a cause career anchor have high correlation with continuance commitment (0.3360) and normative commitment (0.5495).

**Table 3. Correlation of Career anchors with Commitment based on gender types**

| Gender | Number of responses | Commitment Variable | Career Anchor | Correlation value |
|--------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Men    | 50                  | AC                  | SE            | 0.3678            |
|        |                     | CC                  | GM            | 0.6257            |
|        |                     | NC                  | GM            | 0.6338            |
| Women  | 50                  | AC                  | SE            | 0.3715            |
|        |                     | CC                  | SV            | 0.3360            |
|        |                     | NC                  | SV            | 0.5495            |

**9.2. Organizational Hierarchy**
Table 4 shows the correlation of Career anchors with Commitment type for junior level and middle level employees in the IT organization. From a total of 43 junior level employees it can be seen that
Security and Stability career anchor is highly correlated to Affective Commitment (0.3954). General Management career anchor is seen highly correlated to Continuance Commitment (0.3174) and Normative Commitment (0.6367). From a total of 55 middle level employees it can be seen that Autonomy is highly correlated with the Affective Commitment (0.3235), General management career anchor is seen highly correlated with Continuance Commitment (0.5002) and service & dedication to a cause career anchor is highly correlated with continuance commitment (0.5086).

Table 4. Correlation of Career anchors with Commitment based on hierarchy levels

| Role            | Number of responses | Commitment Variable | Career Anchor | Correlation value |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Junior Level    | 45                  | AC                  | SE            | 0.3954            |
|                 |                     | CC                  | GM            | 0.3174            |
|                 |                     | NC                  | GM            | 0.6367            |
| Middle          | 55                  | AC                  | AU            | 0.3715            |
|                 |                     | CC                  | GM            | 0.3360            |
|                 |                     | NC                  | SV            | 0.5495            |

9.3. Organizational Size

Table 5 shows the correlation between career anchors and commitment types based on the number of employees in the organization. For small organization were employee strength is less than 50,000. From a total of 31 respondents it can be seen that Pure Challenge career anchors is highly correlated to Affective Commitment (0.4399), Entrepreneurial Creativity is highly correlated to Continuance Commitment (0.6321) and General Management is highly correlated with Normative Commitment (0.6858). From 28 respondents in Type 2 organization where the employee strength is between 50,000 to 2 lakh it can be seen that Security and Stability career anchors is highly correlated to Affective Commitment (0.6037), Entrepreneurial Creativity is highly correlated to Continuance Commitment (0.1547) and General Management is highly correlated with Normative Commitment (0.4456).

Table 5. Correlation of Career anchors with Commitment based on employee’s strength

| Employee Strength | Number of responses | Commitment Variable | Career Anchor | Correlation value |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <50,000           | 31                  | AC                  | CH            | 0.4399            |
|                   |                     | CC                  | EC            | 0.6321            |
|                   |                     | NC                  | GM            | 0.6858            |
| 50,000 to 2 lakh  | 28                  | AC                  | SE            | 0.6037            |
|                   |                     | CC                  | EC            | 0.1547            |
|                   |                     | NC                  | GM            | 0.4456            |
| above 2 lakh      | 41                  | AC                  | SE            | 0.2367            |
|                   |                     | CC                  | GM            | 0.6358            |
|                   |                     | NC                  | GM            | 0.5536            |

From 41 respondents in Type 3 organizations where the employee strength is above 2 lakh it can be seen that Security and Stability career anchors is highly correlated to Affective Commitment (0.2367) and General Management in highly correlated with Continuance Commitment (0.6358) and Normative Commitment (0.5536).
10. DISCUSSION
Lifestyle, Technical Function and Pure Challenge are the highest rated career anchors by the gen Y IT professionals in India. That may be evident from the study done by Martin [19] who defines Generation Y IT professionals as employees who are willing to take up challenging tasks in their current role and also seeking to find a work-life balance. Taking the gender into consideration, the gen Y women working in IT organizations who perceive to have a security and stability in their career, tend to show more emotional belonging to the organization. Apart from this, gen Y women who perceive Service and Dedication to cause career anchor tend to project higher amount of continuance and normative commitment. This is because they look forward in adding value to the work and it creates a sense of obligation within the organization. Commitment among gen Y Men could be seen influenced by their General Managerial career anchors. Research explains that many factors (dominant number of male, managing complex task, gender statistics at executive level) contribute to the sense of belonging within an IT organization [20]. It can be also seen that all the career anchors of women are positively correlated with all commitment types; this is evident from the study done by Quesenberry and Traut [13]; who found that women exhibit a combination of career anchors and it varies based on the temporal characteristics.

Taking hierarchy into consideration, junior level Gen Y IT employee who perceives to have security and stability as their dominant career anchors tend to exhibit high degree of emotional attachment towards the organization. Also junior level gen Y IT employee who perceive general managerial career anchors look to have more loyalty toward the organization (high on continuance and normative commitment). In the middle level gen Y IT employees it can be seen that people perceiving autonomy tend to have more emotional connect and thereby have high affective commitment. Continuance commitment can be seen high among gen Y employees perceiving general managerial career anchors. This clearly shows that gen Y employees have a high degree of fear in losing their job and hence look forward for opportunities to move up in the hierarchy and remain attached to the same organization. Gen Y employees with service dedication to a cause as their perceived anchors tend to exhibit more of normative commitment. They tend to be committed to the organization because they feel that their work in the organization is valuable [21].

Taking the employee strength in the organization we can see that across the three categories; people with a general managerial competency tend to be more loyal to the organization and try to stay back and grow up within the organization. Similarly we can see that continuance commitment is exhibited highly by the GenY IT employees with entrepreneurial creativity career anchor. These people tend to weight the pros and cons of leaving the organization. They can be seen as more productive if entrepreneurial opportunities are given within the organization.

11. CONCLUSION
From the study done by Holt, Marques and Way [22] it is found that the gen y workforce look forward for Challenge, Personal growth, making positive impact, success, financial stability and ability to help in their workplace. This can be seen from our study that in Gen Y IT employees Pure Challenge, Technical function and Lifestyle are the highest rated anchors. Research found that job security and lifetime employment are replaced by flexibility, creativity and innovation [23]. It can be also seen that HRM practices done within the IT organization in India have a positive correlation with the organizational commitment of the software professionals [24]. Hence the major implication from our study is that generation Y IT employees have a specific career expectation which has to be recognized by the HR partners and design a job accordingly to increase the commitment level in the employees. In
the world of opportunities if you are not able to bind the job with the expectation of the people then it becomes a challenge for the organization. It is recommended that organization must use generational diversity as an opportunity to design and tailor the retention strategies [25]. In today’s context it can be seen that attrition is a major challenge for the IT organizations. Hence this research suggests that HR partners design work based on the generational expectations around the job which will positively influence the commitment level among the IT employees and thereby reduce the rate of attrition in IT organizations.

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