



VIEWPORT 2015

Tracking the Career Trajectories of Men and Women
in India to Assess Career Intentionality

- a report by FLEXI Careers India -



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Foreword

The day - March 8th 2015. The occasion – the 104th anniversary of the International Women's Day. After almost 15 years of working in the space of Diversity & Inclusion, I am delighted to report greater headway than before in the dialogue of progressing women:

01. The words “work-life integration” and “flexibility” are no longer dangerous alarm bells that organizations shy away from. Over 70% of the companies keen on increasing women's workforce participation encourage and implement these concepts.
02. Career enablers for women are taken seriously. Day care centers, in-house creches, supportive networks and skill-building programs for women, are invested in.
03. Best-in-class organizations see practices around Diversity & Inclusion not as indulgent benevolence but as critical sustainability efforts.

However, in my duty as a mirror of women's workforce trends, I also have to report the following:

01. Firstly, India's high corporate and economic growth is not seeing women's contribution in larger numbers. India's current workforce participation rate (2014) for urban women in white-collared jobs is at 18%, a shockingly low number compared to countries at the same level of economic activity.
02. Secondly, women are leaving the workplace in greater numbers than before. A 2013 study by IIM-Bangalore based on NSSO data reports: “India has experienced rapid economic growth, structural shifts in the economy, increase in educational attainment levels, and rapid urbanization in the last 25 years. In the same period there has been a 23% decline in the female labor force participation rate.”
03. And thirdly, educated women seem to be leaving the workplace more than their lesser educated counterparts. Economists Klasen and Pieters found in a 2013 study that there was a U-shaped pattern of the association of female education with female labor force participation. At very low levels of female education, women's participation rates are high. However, at medium education levels they dip sharply and rise again marginally at higher levels. In contrast, male workforce participation rates are close to 100% and do not differ by education level.

To an organization that works towards creating a 50-50 gender balance in Indian workplaces, the above trends are worrying. Especially when we work with over a 100 top corporates in India

that have a deep appetite for increasing women's presence and participation at all levels in the organization's hierarchy and have resultant deep creases on their foreheads when they find efforts not bearing the required results. And I am talking about those organizations that have progressed well into the journey of Gender Inclusion and have already actioned the hygiene factors in the hierarchy of initiatives.

It is in this context that a study that probes into the “Intentionality” of Indian women in pursuing a career assumes significance. Apart from all the extrinsic contributors to the progress of women, is there a key role played by the woman's own orientation and intent? Does she prepare a roadmap for managing her career along the same lines as a company's blueprint to meet objectives? Does she demonstrate a preparedness to tackle the sudden impediments that might come her way? And does she do this in the same manner as men?

Over the last 8 months, we have worked on this study and labored over its ramifications. Over 20 organizations and about 2500 men and women from India's workplaces participated in this study. The results are more than shocking – they reveal a clear pattern in how today's urban, educated woman views her career and what she does or does not do to reach leadership, career continuity and growth. Based on the findings, we have put together a set of recommendations which we feel would help organizations as also the woman to pursue an ‘Intentional’ career path.

The obvious truth at the end of the study is that like the proverbial Mona Lisa, there is more to explore and research on this fascinating subject of the Indian woman's engagement with a professional identity than has been accomplished within the scope of this study. We hope to unravel more facets of the Indian Woman Professional's unique person, with your help, in our next projects.

Till then, here's to an Intentional Career Path for every aspiring, deserving woman in India!

Saundarya Rajesh
- Dr. Saundarya Rajesh



Introduction

At a campus interview last week in Mumbai, 13 students were selected for various roles in an FMCG company. Harinee, 23, one of the 5 selected girls, was ecstatic about beginning her career in the company that was well-known for producing leaders. Ambitious and focused, Harinee aspires to prove the model. "I see myself leading a business in the next 20 years", she says, excitedly. But the statistics around women's workforce participation have a sobering effect on her dreams. "But I do worry if I can endure all the extra hardships that women have to face to reach that level", she adds thinking about her mother and aunt who have dropped off the career track on account of childcare. "More importantly, I am concerned that I should have an uninterrupted career path to have a realistic chance of giving a shot at growth and leadership. Will that happen? Only time can tell," she says. Her concerns are real. There is a worrying drop in women's workforce participation in India today.

- 42% of university graduates in India are women, but only 27% of entry level workforce in India, Inc. is women
- 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%
- 48% of Indian women abort their careers midway
- The overall gender gap in India is 65% and India is at the 101st position on a tally of 136 countries basis this gap as per the World Economic forum's gender gap index
- There has been a drop in female labor force participation in India by 6% during the period 2003-2004 to 2009-2010 according to NSSO reports

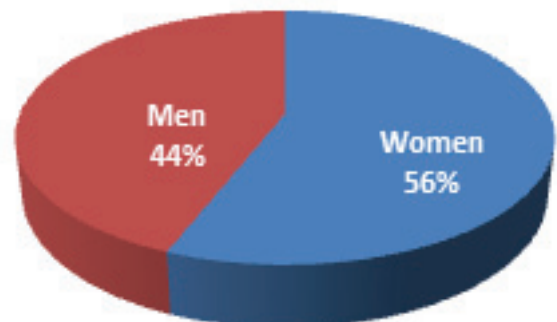
It is essential to understand the causes behind this, as world over the benefits of diversity and inclusion are conclusively proven and companies are pulling out all stops to ensure that Gender diversity is increased. A Diversity & Inclusion lead of a top-notch Indian IT company that is a market leader is the space of outsourcing, says, on conditions of anonymity, "In our company, we are still struggling with a very poor representation of women. We do everything possible – provide flexibility, give mentors to high-potential women, institute crèches, provide transportation – basically everything. And yet, on a regular basis women drop off. The reasons seem to be unfathomable".

Corporates therefore now train their focus on something deeper – are women intentional about their careers? Could lower career intentionality amongst women be the key reason for poor workforce representation?

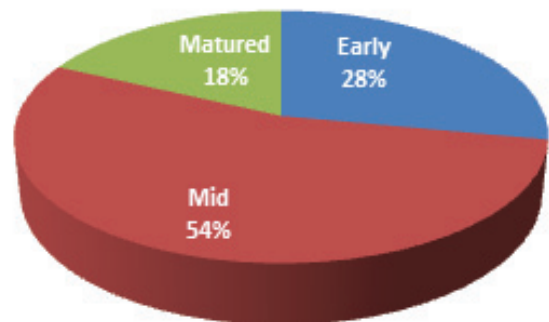
Looking at where the maximum drain of female talent in the Indian corporate sector occurs (typically when they are aged between 30 and 40 and are consumed by the responsibilities of being the primary caretaker of their families and when they are most likely to encounter opportunities for career progress) a study on intentionality among men and women in India becomes imperative. Is there in existence a gender gap in career intentionality? At what career stages do men and women typically start showing career intentionality? What can be done to bridge the gap that exists? Do women need to demonstrate a greater level of career intentionality than men to overcome challenges till we reach a level playing field? If so, how do women increase their internationality?

Study on Career Intentionality of Men and women in India

A nationwide study conducted by FLEXI Careers India, a social enterprise that works in the area of women's workforce participation aimed at finding answers to these pertinent questions. A total of 2456 Indian professionals were contacted through direct, online and social media platforms to respond to this research project titled "VIEWPORT 2015 – Career Trajectories of men and women to assess career intentionality". Many companies – both Indian and US based, with operations in India participated in the study. Out of the respondents, 44% were men and 56% were women. While 28% of the professionals were in their early career stage (age between 21 and 30), 54% were in their mid career stage (age between 31 and 40) and 18% were in their matured career stages (above the age of 40).



Distribution of men and women



Distribution of professionals across career stages

The findings of this study provide conclusive recommendations for the development of the "Career Intentionality Model" to bridge the "career intentionality" gap between the genders.

What is career intentionality?

Career Intentionality may be defined as the extent to which a professional deploys intention in charting his/her career trajectory. It is also a function of the active career stage a professional is at, which is:

- Early (between the ages of 20-30)
- Mid (between the ages of 30-40)
- Matured (40 and above)

Career Intentionality Drivers

Career Intentionality Driver	Definition	What or who?
Career Orientation	The relative importance a professional attributes to his/her career as against his/her home	• Career Primary • Career and Home • Home Primary
Career Motivator	The individual(s) a professional idolizes and those who inspire him/her to conquer greater career heights	• Corporate Leader • Political Leader • Social Activist • Actor • Others
Career Driver	The factors that drives a professional towards pursuing a career	• Breadwinner of the family • To meet the financial goal for the family • To meet financial goals for self • Career Achievement • Use skills for common good
Career Aspiration	The tangible/intangible outcomes an individual aspires to achieve by pursuing a career	• Advancement in organizational hierarchy • Job Security • Professional expertise • Work life integration • Opportunity to share learning • Opportunity to mentor others
Career Influencer	The support network that influences and shapes a professional's career path	• Parents • Spouse • In-laws • Boss • Friend • Mentor • Other



Key Findings

Key Finding 1:

Majority of professionals (both men and women) at the early stage aspire to gain professional expertise; however as women move on, Work life balance becomes more significant to them. Contrarily for men career growth becomes a priority.

The most prevalent career aspirations of men in their early career stage:

- To gain professional expertise (66%)
- To advance in their organizational hierarchy (55%)

Once they move on to the mid level, career advancement became the most important priority.

- 61% of mid career men aspired for advancement

At the matured level, they demonstrated the greatest intent on attaining work life balance.

- 56% in matured stage aspired for greater work life balance

Women waited till they climb certain segments of the ladder to aspire for career growth.

- While 50% of early career women aspired for career growth, 59% aspired so at the mid stage.
- Gaining professional expertise was the most important career aspiration for women at the early stage (64%).

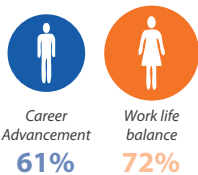
As women move on to the mid and matured stages, work-life balance becomes paramount to them.

- 72% of women in the mid stage and 64% of those in the matured stage sought better work life balance.

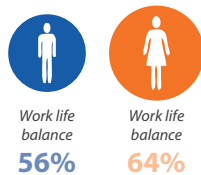
EARLY STAGE



MID STAGE



MATURED STAGE



It is most probably during the mid career stage (between the ages of 30 and 40) that women have the greatest share of family responsibilities – child bearing and rearing, elder care and other household chores and it is but natural that a work-life integrated career is what they aspire for the most. Men at this career stage have probably laid a strong career foundation and are all set to conquer professional heights that translate to the most important aspiration of career advancement

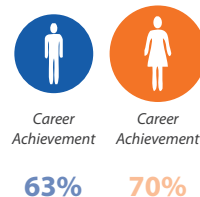
Key Finding 2:

Women focus more on 'career achievement' than men

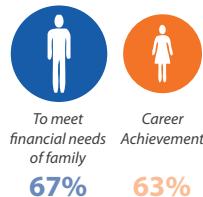
Indian Women Professionals gave greater importance to career achievement than men, at any given career stage indicating the greater professionalism women aspire for today.

- 70% of early career, 63% of mid career and 64% of matured career women were driven to greater career achievement as against 63%, 62% and 62% of early, mid and matured career men
- For men, meeting financial goals for the family assumed supreme importance in the mid and matured stages (67% and 66% respectively)
- lesser percentages of women pursued careers for the cause of their family's financial needs (57% and 49% respectively), which however is a sure up from 38% of early career women proving that as women progress in their careers, they significantly contribute to the financial well being of the family.
- The fact that our society still prescribes to the 'male breadwinner, female caretaker' family model was substantiated by the results: while only 4%, 8% and 12% of women at the early, mid and matured stages were breadwinners of their families, 19%, 38% and 37% of men at the three active career stages were breadwinners.
- In short, while monetary needs are always key career drivers for men, for women this assumes greater significance in the mid and the matured stages.

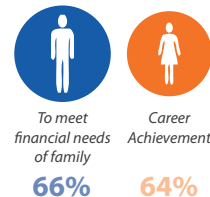
EARLY STAGE



MID STAGE



MATURED STAGE



Key Finding 3:

Men depend more on an external, non-family support system than women

Amongst the early career professionals

For men:

- 10% were supported by their bosses
- 26% by their friends
- 10% by their mentors

For women:

- 7% were supported by their bosses
- 20% by their friends
- 8% by their mentors

The percentages of women who sought support from external networks did not show any significant change at the mid stage:

- 11% had their boss's support.
- 9% had friends' support
- 4% were supported by mentors

As for mid career men, these figures were relatively better.

- 17% having boss's support
- 27% being backed by friends
- 11% being groomed by mentors.

It is thus evident that women preferred to seek help from home. This exhibits a clear case for women to build external networks for mentors and sponsors for their career growth.

EARLY STAGE



Non family support
46%



Non family support
35%

MID STAGE



Non family support
55%



Non family support
20%

MATURED STAGE



Non family support
57%



Non family support
33%

Key Finding 4:

Men have more corporate role models than women

For both men and women, the tendency to idolize a leader rose with age.

- The percentages of men and women who idolize corporate leaders increased across the stages. From 21% to 26% to 31% in IWPs and 22% to 26% to 41% in IMPs.
- There were more men than women (41% of men as against 31% of women) who idolized corporate leaders in the matured-phases of their careers. This implies greater intentionality amongst men in aspiring for leadership positions.

EARLY STAGE



Have a Corporate Role Model
22%



Have a Corporate Role Model
21%

MID STAGE



Have a Corporate Role Model
26%



Have a Corporate Role Model
26%

MATURED STAGE



Have a Corporate Role Model
41%



Have a Corporate Role Model
31%

Key Finding 5:

Men progress in careers faster than women; women's careers are more prone to breaks

The career growth rate of men was greater as compared to women

- There were 49% of men donning senior level executive positions (GM/VP/CXO) at the matured stage as against 36% of women

While the percentages of men who took career breaks increased with the career stage they are at.

- 9% in early career to 10% at mid career to 15% at matured career

For women this peaked at the mid level and fell as women broke the notorious glass ceiling and progressed to matured career stages .

- 14% of early career women took breaks.
- 22% of women took breaks when they were at the mid career stage
- 20% at the advanced career stage

The tendency for career break is highest amongst women at the mid stage, the career stage when juggling professional and personal commitments tend to weigh them down resulting in a leaking talent pipeline of women. Therefore, it becomes highly imperative for both organizations and women alike to work on building on the Career Intentionality before they enter the mid phase of their career.

EARLY STAGE



Have taken a career break
9%



Have taken a career break
14%

MID STAGE



Have taken a career break
10%



Have taken a career break
22%

MATURED STAGE



Have taken a career break
15%



Have taken a career break
20%



Recommendations:

It is most probably during the mid career stage (between the ages of 30 and 40) that women have the greatest share of family responsibilities – child bearing and rearing, elder care and other household chores and it is but natural that a work-life integrated

career is what they aspire for the most. Men at this career stage have probably laid a strong career foundation and are all to set to conquer professional heights that translate to the most important aspiration of career advancement. Here are few recommendations

Organizations	Indian Men Professionals (IMP)	Indian Women Professionals (IWP)
Become gender bilingual in order to identify the distinct enablers required to promote intentionality of careers, in both men and women	Enroll for formal programs to enhance prospects of career progress	Have a career plan earlier on in your career
Initiate and nurture mentoring networks within the organization involving SMEs (Subject Matter Experts) in order to enable professionals' career planning	Revisit your primary career anchors periodically and evaluate them basis their abilities to ensure work-family integration	Enlist your career priorities and be aware of your partner's views before you enter the institution of marriage
Invest in sensitization programs on 'Diversity and Inclusion' initiatives	Actively seek mentoring	Actively seek career enabling support systems and invest time, effort and money when necessary
Conduct leadership workshops catering to specific needs of leaders from both the genders	Be financially disciplined paying focus to saving, budgeting and investing your earning	Inculcate financial discipline during the early stages of your career
Cultivate an organizational culture devoid of biases on the basis of gender, race, age, rank etc. and in which professionals of both genders compete with each other in a competitive yet healthy environment	Be supportive of the cause of women's career intentionality (spouse/sister/mother/colleague or friend)	Enroll for formal programs to enhance prospects of career progress
		In the event of an inevitable career break, keep alive your intentionality to comeback; stay connected

Conclusions

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 was that Indian women professionals were more intent on career achievement than men, at any given career stage indicating the greater professionalism women aspire for today. Monetary needs drove 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 which 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 was 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 was greater as compared to women; there were 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 are 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 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.

About FLEXI Careers India

FLEXI Careers India (FLEXI), a social enterprise from AVTAR, works extensively in the area of Diversity & Inclusion with a special focus on gender diversity. FLEXI enables high-growth organizations to focus sharply on an inclusive talent strategy to make the workplace more welcoming for women. FLEXI also provides placement services for diversity recruitment, workshops and training programs, creating flexi-career tracks through Flexi career solutions and Flexi-working methods.

'AVTAR I-WIN' is a service from FLEXI Careers India for creating sustainable careers for women professionals. More than 30000 women professionals are registered members on www.avtariwin.com, a unique portal for creation and fulfilment of work-life integrated careers for women. More than 3000 women have been placed on part-time/flexi-time/full-time jobs with organisations across India. This includes organisations from IT, BPO, FMCG, Banking & Financial services, Retail and other industries.

FLEXI conducts periodical research on women's careers, work-life balance and gender diversity. FLEXI's services are based on the findings of these studies.

- Viewport – 2007: Country wide study on working women professionals
- Viewport – 2009: Survey covering 283 married Indian Males aged between 25 – 65 to understand male perception of working women professionals
- Outlook Business - AVTAR Career Creators nation-wide survey 2010 on Work-life Balance
- Viewport – 2010: 'Flexible Careers – Moment of Truth' - Study covering responses of 341 senior women professionals and 45 top organisations
- Viewport – 2012: The Impact of Career Enablers on Women's Workforce Participation
- Diversity & Inclusion Practices in India - a state-of-the-nation study
- Viewport – 2014: The Economic Centeredness of Indian Women Professionals
- Second Career Of Women Professionals In India: A Corporate Perspective
- 'SEGUE' Sessions: Helping Indian Women Professionals Transition Back To Mainstream Careers After Career Breaks