

CHAPTER I

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1.1. Preview of Chapter

The psychology of career development is one of the most robust and vigorously growing branches of Behavioral Sciences and Career Psychology has been an area of concentrated investigation too. Since the last decade, research and methods dealing with career counseling have increasingly been incorporated into the mainstream of psychological research and practice. The following chapter introduces the topic of quarter life crisis amongst employees having work experience that ranges from one to six years. In this chapter, various factors that affect quarter life crisis with respect to various career orientations have been studied; this has been done on the basis of previous research work and a pilot study that was conducted. Based on the findings, a conceptual framework highlighting quarter life career crisis is charted out. The chapter concludes with an overview of the statement of the problem, objective of the research, operational definition of key terms, the hypothesis of the research and the variables under study. The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader a concise snapshot of the research thesis.

1.2. Career Counseling

Today, career theory is a growing interdisciplinary body of knowledge with roots as a subfield of organization and management studies (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Collin & Young, 2000). In the early 1970's, the field of career studies was not yet

established. But, as the prevailing historical narrative goes, a small group of organizational scholars, led by Douglass Hall (1976), Edgar Schein (1974), and

John Van Maanen (1976) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, grew increasingly interested in the long-term issues associated with working in organizations and the long-term influence of careers on individuals, the institutions within which they worked, and the societies to which they belonged.

In the last several decades, changes such as increased globalization and rapid technological advancements have precipitated into an organizational restructuring that has forced those in careers studies to re-examine traditional career assumptions (Sullivan, 1999). If industrial age careers are marked by long-term employment within a large, stable organization, the postindustrial career appears to be a much more interorganizational phenomenon. As firms downsize and flatten managerial structures, individuals are becoming mobile, by choice or chance. The culture of work has also changed with the relative integration of women and minorities. Individuals are increasingly moving both intraorganizationally, across projects and jobs within an organization and interorganizationally, across employers and even occupations. Other traditional boundaries, like those dividing workplace from home and recreation, are also being permeated. Career theorists such as Schein (1996), Holland (1997) et al. have argued that focusing on the perspective of individuals adds to the understanding of recent economic changes and how individuals cope with this change. This theory does not apply to all workers in all occupations; however, boundaryless career theory (Arthur 1994) particularly applies to highly skilled knowledge workers and thus has implications for research on careers.

Career development is a field that is becoming increasingly relevant for both employees and employers. Economic and technological developments have resulted in working careers becoming unpredictable due to changing work opportunities and shifts in labor. A permanent job with one employer, preferably for the entire span of a person's working life, can no longer be considered the normal work pattern. At present, career opportunities tend to be seen in the light of employability (Van Dam, 2004), recognizing that career development frequently goes beyond the boundaries of one organization (Arthur, 1994). The notion of a traditional career, chiefly determined by an employee's preliminary training and by opportunities provided by employers, has shifted to the concept of a changing career, largely guided by the employee himself. This change toward employee self-management in career development that fuels interest in the personal dispositions that could explain this type of self-management goes well for some people, but not for others.

Various remedies are being offered to deal with the resulting havoc in careers. Typically, the recommendations call for a shift to a new, more change-oriented definition of careers and philosophy of career management. Responsibility for career development must now lie with the individual, not the organisation; individuals should prepare themselves for a career involving frequent changes in employers and in the very nature of the work that they perform. Employees need to be flexible, versatile in their skills, knowledge and must be willing to go anywhere, at any time and at a moment's notice, to do anything. One must not cling to a job, organisation or type of work. Those who still think of getting ahead in terms of moving up, who feel commitment to a particular function or type of work, must get in tune with the times and learn to adapt and to let go.

While such recommendations have real merit, this reality can also be managed from a different perspective. Organisations need stability and commitment and so do employees. Organisations need growth and consequently, they need people who itch to drive and build the organisation. Organisations need individuals who are highly versatile and adaptive and people who thrive on variety and change.

1.3. Need for the Research

The researcher felt the need to study this area. Since the last decade, it has been observed that most employees take up job assignments that they are either not qualified for or interested in. Some maybe qualified, but may not have a proper 'career fitment' at the organisation, as per their career aspiration. Many a time, organisations do not honour their commitment made to employees. After a brief duration of work, employees could face a crisis with regard to the 'job content' at their organisations. The researcher wanted to study this and see if the employees have the self efficacy to make decisions pertaining to their careers. Another need for this study was to use the career anchor scale and to see the various career orientations in the four chosen sectors. The need was then to study all of this under the backdrop of career satisfaction and to see if employees are satisfied in their career.

1.4. Statement of Research

A study of Career Decision Self Efficacy linked with Career Anchors and to see whether its outcome leads to Career Satisfaction in the early stage of one's life is what the researcher wanted to explore.

1.4.1. Title of Research: Quarter Life Crisis - Effect of Career Self Efficacy and Career Anchors on Career Satisfaction

1.5. Aim of Research

To study the effects of quarter life crisis w.r.t. career decision self efficacy and career anchors and to see if it results in career satisfaction amongst employees.

1.6. Objectives of Research

The current study has the following overall research objectives:

- 1) To study Quarter Life Crisis in the Indian Scenario with reference to various sectors.
- 2) To examine the relationship between Quarter life crises of the employees with varying years of experience

- 3) To examine the relationship between Career Self efficacy of the employees with varying years of experience.
- 4) To examine the relationship between Career Anchors of the employees with varying years of experience.
- 5) To examine the relationship between Career Satisfaction of the employees with varying years of experience.
- 6) To examine the relationship between Quarter Life Crisis and Career Satisfaction of employees.
- 7) To examine the relationship between Career Self Efficacy and Career Satisfaction of employees.
- 8) To examine the relationship between Career Anchors and Career Satisfaction of employees.
- 9) To compare Quarter life crisis of male and female employees.
- 10) To compare Career Decision Self Efficacy of male and female employees.
- 11) To compare Career Anchors of male and female employees.
- 12) To compare Career Satisfaction of male and female employees.
- 13) To compare Quarter life crisis that are exhibited by employees in 4 sectors: Business Process Outsourcing (B.P.O.) / Call Centre, Retail, Software and Telecom.
- 14) To compare Career Decision Self Efficacy exhibited by employees in 4 sectors: BPO/ Call Centre, Retail, Software and Telecom.
- 15) To compare Career Anchors exhibited by employees in 4 sectors: BPO/ Call Centre, Retail, Software and Telecom.
- 16) To compare Career Satisfaction exhibited by employees in 4 sectors: BPO/ Call Centre, Retail, Software and Telecom.

1.7. Operational Definitions of Key Terms

1.7.1. Quarter Life Crisis

The Quarter Life Crisis, as defined by Wilner (1997) “is essentially a period of anxiety, uncertainty and inner turmoil that often accompanies the transition to adulthood”. Individuals are considered career undecided if they have either not established a career goal or they have set a career goal over which they experience uncertainty or discomfort. The early life structure or quarter life for early adulthood ranges from age 22 – 28 years. The few graduates that do land a job after graduation usually have to work 12-15 hours per day at a job, but the job may not be of their interest. The Quarter Life Crisis or early life crisis is essentially a period of anxiety, uncertainty and inner turmoil that often accompanies the transition to adulthood. Not getting quality work after college adds fuel to the fire and after the initial years at work, these young adults may suffer from a quarter life career crisis.

1.7.2. Career Decision Self Efficacy

Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as “beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments”. According to Bandura (1997), self efficacy influences, (1) the courses of action people choose to pursue, (2) how much effort people will put forth in a given endeavor, (3) how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failure, (4) people's resilience to adversity, (5) whether someone's thought patterns are self

hindering or self-aiding and (6) how much stress and depression is experienced in coping with taxing environmental demands.

Making decisions regarding a career is an important task for young people. Not all young people make career decisions easily and many experience episodes of indecision before settling on a career path (Fouad, 1994; Tinsley, 1992). Career decisions can also have long-term repercussions, as they can commit a student to a particular career path that can involve long periods of education and training before actually resulting in employment. Because of its importance to career decision-making and career interventions, career decision self-efficacy has received probably the most research attention relative to other domains of career behavior. Career Decision-Making Self Efficacy was originally defined by Taylor and Betz (1983) “as the individual's belief that he or she can successfully complete tasks necessary to making career decisions”.

1.7.3. Career Anchors

Younger employees seek lateral rather than hierarchical career path and these, are upheld by career values or anchors, increasingly where cross international borders are concerned. This laid the groundwork for Schein's (1974, 1978) development of his theory of ‘career anchors’, exploring a broader view of careers by examining the interrelationships between individuals' career motives, talents and values.

Career anchor theory was developed by Edgar Schein (1978) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the 1960's. Career anchors emerged as a way of explaining the pattern of reasons given by the graduates as they progressed

through their careers. Schein's (1974, 1978) career research questioned how and why individuals make career decisions. The result was the development of his theory of career anchors, which he defines as 'motivational/attitudinal/value syndrome that guides and constrains the person's career' (Schein, 1974). A career anchor has three components: self-perceived talent and abilities, self-perceived motives and needs, and self-perceived concept attitudes and values.

1.7.4. Career Satisfaction

One way that organisations may meet this challenge is to support employees to develop their own careers and increase their Career Satisfaction. This approach is consistent with the recommendation that organisations perform a new supportive, rather than directive, role in enabling their employees' career success (Baruch, 2006). Career satisfaction measures the extent to which an employee has made satisfactory progress toward goals for income level, advancement and development skills (Greenhaus, Parasuram, Wormley, 1990).

While one may focus on the role that organisational support can play in employees' career satisfaction, it is important to also consider the role that individuals play in their career success, particularly given the trend towards more individualistic career management in the last few decades (Baruch, 2006). Exploring the impact that organisational and individual difference variables have on career satisfaction will result in a more comprehensive understanding of these relationships.

1.8. Measures

- **Independent Variables:** Quarter Life Crisis, Career Decision Self Efficacy and Career Anchors
- **Dependent Variable:** Career Satisfaction
- **Moderating Variables:** Gender, Sectors chosen for the study and Total years of Experience
- **Control Variable:** Employee Age

1.9. Conceptual Framework

Based on the pilot research and a review of existing literature in the area, the concept map was charted out. It highlighted the role that quarter life crisis, career anchors and career self efficacy have on career satisfaction. The variables of interest in the research study in these areas have been highlighted in the pictorial model below (Figure 1.1).

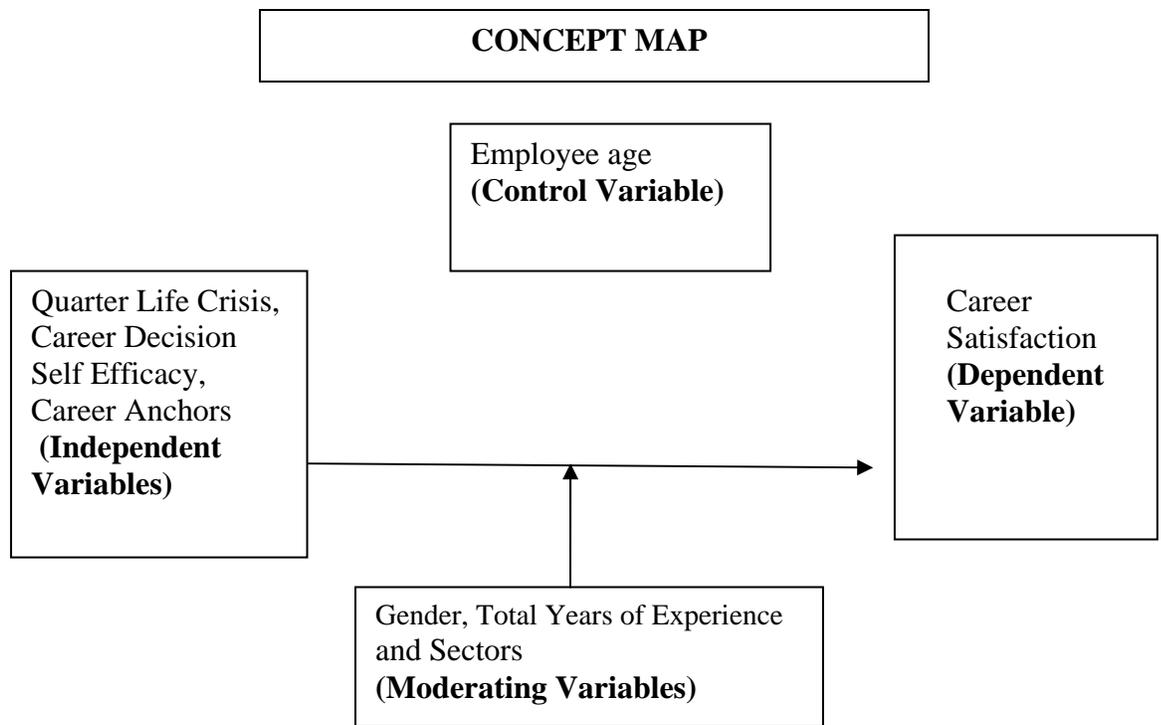


Figure 1.1.

Based on the pilot research and a review of existing literature in the area the variables were charted out.

1.10 Research and Scope of Study

The proposed research aims at understanding a systematic study of quarter life career crisis in the Indian context. It would then attempt to use this knowledge in Career Counseling for employees in their quarter life.

It was decided to conduct this study on employees in the four industries for all functions viz. BPO / Call Centre, Retail, Telecom and Software with an experience range of 1 – 6 years. The experience age of around 1 – 3 years was also considered in the chosen sample, though the Career Anchor study by Edgar Schein (1976,1994) indicates that a minimum of 3 – 5 years is beneficial , three studies have been carried out in this area (Chang et al, 2007, Kniveton, 2004, Marshall and Bonner, 2003). The researcher wanted to study career anchors of employees with an experience range of 1 – 3 years in comparison to the original study by Edgar Schein (1976). Careers have advanced tremendously over the last thirty years and researcher’s goal was to find out if the Career Anchors study holds good even for this experience range.

This study will identify the Career Anchors and Career Decision Self Efficacy which will lead to Career Satisfaction under the umbrella of Quarter Life Crisis. It will therefore, add to the body of knowledge in the field of career counseling.

1.11. Significance and Implications of Research

The research study has significance and relevance to researchers, academicians, human resources managers and as well as career counselors / industrial psychologists. Researchers can delve into employees' decision-making capability where careers are concerned and review which Career Anchors employees opt for and then compare the same across various industries. The cumulative Career Anchor information can be a good indication of the key drivers for Career Satisfaction and create an understanding of the overriding career culture.

For Human Resource Managers, this research can aid can in mapping the employee career interest vis a vis the organisation's requirement and will hereby minimize attrition. It will also help in the area of performance appraisals, career counseling, designing of career initiatives and flexible career paths, incentive and reward systems, training programs to accommodate the need for a variety of career anchor occupants. It can help in creating a healthy balance in the organization for the employees and for the organisation itself.

It can aid career counselors in conducting such tests for employees in the early stage of their career. This study would help career counselors to provide inputs to help Human Resource Managers in deploying the right kind of human resource tools and organization development interventions at the workplace.

There are very few significant academic research studies conducted in India with respect to these areas. On all these above mentioned grounds, the current research study will contribute to the field of career counseling for employees in the early stage of their career.

1.12. Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations of the study are that the research was conducted during a period of global recession, though the recession was not felt immediately in India. Secondly, the effect of the employer brand on quarter life crisis has not been studied. The career orientation between the employee's designation and career anchors could not be done, as there were too many designations in the sample and it did not yield any conclusive results. Lastly, the age gap between completion of one's education and the commencement of work has not been taken into account.

1.13. Review of the Chapter

The introductory chapter of the research study began by discussing the area of Career Counseling. The pilot and the research study that was conducted among the employees in the early stage of one's career was touched upon and chosen to form the conceptual framework of the present research. The major variables used in the conceptual framework were discussed in detail, followed by a snapshot view of the research. The chapter concluded with the significance and limitations of the research study.

Having established the conceptual framework in the introductory chapter, the following chapter delves into the depths of the existing literary theories on the factors in the conceptual framework.