Perception of Young Adults towards Work: A systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

With the advancement of technology and the upsurge of digital dependence, emergence of newworkforce is approaching the global market. The current younggeneration is entering the work force leading to the conception a whole new arena of work dynamics. Due to the previously evolving generational shift and with the Covid-19 pandemic, the young adults are unfolding and experiencing a new way of making professional choices and various factors are considered to play crucial role in molding their career. Young adults unlike previous generations are exposed to wide digital platforms which further shows that it will affect their perception and attitude towards the concept of work. Thus, it is important to carefully understand the core characteristics of young adults as they enter the new phase of work. It is need of the hour that organizations before hiring young adults as their new workforce should know about their personal dispositions, attitudes, preferences, competencies, expectations, and social culture which might greatly influence their performance and outcome. The main aim of this review paper is to highlight and identify the characteristics of young adults, their personal dispositions and factors affecting their perception towards work and career. This paper further seeks to broaden our understanding of the dynamic trends in the work culture, to give a comprehensive discussion on the determinants and suggest implications and directions for the future research.

KEYWORDS: Young adults, Career, Workforce, Perception

I.   INTRODUCTION

As the 21st century progresses, a complete paradigm shift is seen in the lifestyle practices and standards of the present generations. Almost all aspects of human behavior are shaped and molded due to the technological advancement. Change is the new constant, and this generation is adapting and adjusting to the transition in a much progressive way in the domain of education and profession. Researchers are finding answers to whether the younger folks still believe in following and adopting the conventional ideas, lifestyles, occupation, and standards of their forefathers. With the technological development and constant updating of knowledge with easy availability of information through digital mode and social media, the current generation is in a new world of their own which is far ahead from the previous generations.

Due toeasy availability of information and knowledge in digital and online platforms, this generation has developed a whole new set of thinking patterns and way of living which is believed to be impacting all aspects of lifestyle. The young adults have a fresh and holistic perception towards the structure of work and career.

II.   DEFINING YOUNG ADULTHOOD

Young adulthood is such a period in the developmental span which adapts and adjusts to the transition from school to work and begins the process of achieving major milestones of adulthood. The age range of young adulthood is still under study andno clear guidelines are available to designateit;however, the United Nations (UN) categorizesas youth for the people whose age varies between 18 to 24 years of age. According toArnett (2004), young adulthood also spans approximately from 18-26 years of age, and it is considered as transitional stage where the young people are expected to act responsibly, to be financially self-dependent and to contribute effectively as active members of the community. In terms of milestones and challenges, young adults differ from adolescents and adults as they experience a transition from school to work, taking individual responsibility, assuming of new roles and responsibilities as anemployee and starting their own families (Leslie, et al 2017.) In Indian context, the term 'emerging adulthood'is used by Mitra & Arnett, (2015), who describes this phase as one of making important life choices dealing with career, education, relationships, family expectations, financial

responsibility, society and community standards and other crucial decision-makingaspects of life.The notion of making choices in career and entering the new phase of assuming roles and responsibilities as workforce is very crucial in this stage of young adulthood.

III. DEFINING WORK AND CAREER

As per the conventional stages of development, the adolescence to young adulthood goes through the transitional phase of education and career. Work is a much broader and general concept which involves making efforts and accomplishments in order to achieve an objective or goal. Career can be well defined as 'the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time' (Arthur et al. 1989). Jain & Joshi, (2021) describe that an individual's personality and role in society is determined by the career choice one makes and career helps an individual form his or her identity and role based on their past experiences and learning, present position,and future expectations. Good career planning and professional choices determines the overall satisfaction and fulfillment in life.

IV. FACTORS INFLUENCING CAREER CHOICES

There are several factors which influence the perception of young adults towards career choices and work role. The presentstudy intends to highlight and understand the factors involving individual differences and preferences, socio-cultural determinants, work centric aspects and influence of social media and digital dependence.

[1].   Person Centric Factors

As the Young generation goes through the transition period, they have the tendency to adapt and adjust to various life stages and it has a great impact on their individual personal development. The core individual factors like behavior, attitude, interests, talents, personal dispositions, emotions play an important role in shaping their perception towards work.

One of the important characteristics of young adults is their confidence. Research suggests that they are confident about their future, they have a positive outlook towards job and believe that they have better chances of getting good jobs and believe that they will be better and successful than their parents in terms of financial stability (Strauss & Howe, 2006).According to Jain & Joshi(2021), today's youth give more emphasis to sense of

responsibility, they believe in financially supporting their parents and their responsibility towards their family determines their choice of education and careers. They are ambitious and clear about what they want in life and how they want their life to be. The choices which they make in their profession determines their ambitions (Kumar,2019) and they make career decisions keeping their life goals, priorities and needs in mind.

Work ability is another important concept which plays a crucial role in determining the young professional's preference and perception of work. Though only few studies have studied the concept of work ability in young adults as it is mostly explored in the adult work force, but it has become an essential component for this generation to maintain good work ability during the entire phase of work life (Ilmarinen, 2009). The balance between an individual's resources like health, knowledge, attitudes and the working situations like work content, expectations from work and organizational structure is conceptualized as work ability in the context of occupational health by Ilmarinen, (2009). Bostrom et al., (2016) in their study concluded that the work-related factors and personal life influences the young professional's own work responsibility and experienced as work ability.

[2].   Socio-Cultural Determinants

Various research studies have revealed that sociocultural factors greatly influence the work roles and career choices. Age, gender, lifestyles, family patterns, attitudes towards education and work, socioeconomic status, habits, social mobility, housing facilities, health practices and other allied factors influence an individual's perception towards job and professional choice. Parents and family structure play a major role in influencing the young people's future career path. Some parents are the sole decision makers in shaping the future of children who expect or pressurize them to work in the family business. Whereas supportive family structure makes efforts and motivates the youth to take up job opportunities which are potentially rewarding for them. According to Ulrich, Frey and Ruppert, (2018), parental influence on young adult's career choice is much higher than the influence of teachers, vocational counsellors and job-related information available on internet.

Socioeconomic status and family background equally impacts the professional choices made by young adults. Anderson, Gunnarsson, Hedlund & Rosen (2017), stated that young adults belonging to lower socioeconomic status usually view work as basis of income whereas looking for

prospective opportunities and self-realization in job is considered by the people belonging to higher economic status. These sociocultural factors vary for each individual and it is important to understand these factors while selecting a career or joining the workforce.

[3]. Social Media Usage and Digital Dependence

It is widely accepted that young professional's lifestyle is marked by their usage of digital technology and social media. Major paradigm shift is seen in the process of searching jobs, recruitment, and selection.Conducting and appearing for interview through online platforms via skype, zoom, MS Teams is the new trend leaving behind the conventional method of face-to-face interaction. Searching and exploring new work opportunities and applying for the same is now done within no time using internet. Prensky, (2011) refers to youth as digital natives as most of them use social media and are already accustomed to the technological culture which has positive consequences in their professional growth and work productivity. Such complete dependence on digital mode does influence the young adult's viewpoint on work. The Covid 19 pandemic led to the unavoidable growth of digital dependence as the entire organizational set-up changed with professionals adjusting and adapting to the new norms of Work from Home (WFH) and leading to novel ways of work and life (De, Pandey & Pal, 2020). Post pandemic digital dependence has led them to perceive work in a much convenient and productive way.

Amponsah& Bhavani (2017) in their study on the impact of social media on the productivity of young Ghanian adults concluded that usage of social media and social network has shown positive effect and has led to professional advancement and growth in the young adults. This study also stated that women and younger work group have reported of meeting higher job-related expectations through social media.Though social media usage bridges the communication flow and facilitates the platform for information and knowledge sharing, but undue usage also leads to poor work performance. In a study conducted by Junco, (2012) shows that burnout is caused due to excessive social media usage leading to distracted attention and impacting job performance.

[4]. Work Centric Factors

Another important aspect which influences young professional's attitude and perception towards work is the nature of work and its attractiveness, how attractive the job is and how it satisfies the employees is highly considered. Attractive work as defined by Ateg and Hedlund, (2011) includes a "job position that an individual wants, due to positive job characteristics, in an organization perceived as a positive workplace; a position where the employee experiences job stability; and a position that fosters employee identification and dedication."

Social support and social network in workplace are also a significant reason for picking a work option. Young adults usually believe in working with people having similar mindset, interests, values and due to the global social network, they have the tendency to work with people belonging to diverse cultures. Workplace social support can be conceptualized as the extent to which the individuals experience that their wellbeing is given importance in their workplace by the higher management in the organization and the belief that their organization makes efforts to enhance the wellbeing (Eisenberger., al, 2002 and Ford., et al, 2007). Thus, social support is not only a driving factor which leads youth to make decisions whether to stay or leave the job, but the approach of positive social support also leads to better performance and productivity.

Today's youth believe in flexible working hours rather than the conventional 9-5 work timings and prefer to look for a flexi-work culture. Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard, (2014) in their study concluded that flexible working hours has shown positive impact on work-life balance and leads to better job satisfaction and wellbeing as the employee has control over when, where and how much time they work resulting in better handling of work and personal responsibilities. According to survey conducted by Deloitte India,(2022) states that Gen Z and millennials (today's youth) prefer hybrid work culture with remote working and flexible work hours to improve their work-life balance.

Recent trends in the work arena have moved towards entrepreneurship and Start-up culture. Young adults believe in being the boss of their job, in making their own decisions, investing in the financial source and want to be stake-holders of their work. Several reasons for choosing entrepreneurship as a career option are well educated youth with wide expertise in their respective fields, lack of job opportunities and those who are looking for professional self-growth by not working under people or in any organizations (Sardar, 2019). The organizational structure, nature

of job and work culture takes an active role in professional choices made by young adults.

V. CONCLUSION

This study sought to understand the factors influencing the career choice and work of young adults based on the available literature. This study categorized the factors into four domains: individual centric, socio-cultural, usage of social media and work-related aspects. Personal and sociocultural factors vary for each individual and its level of impact is specific and unique to oneself. Today's youth are habituated to the usage of online platforms and social media and are accustomed to the technological shifts leading to positive consequences on performance and productivity. For young workers, job attractiveness, positive social support, flexi work culture is assumed to be the key motivating factors. Young adults who are the new workforce are familiar with the recent fluctuating trends in work culture.

VI. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Theconclusion drawn in this study are valuable in two ways; firstly, young adults could largely relate to various attributes and aspects which might determine their attitude and perception towards work culture. Secondly these conclusions can be considered by the organizations while hiring the new workforce. Though this study is based on the systematic review and relied on secondary sources, whereas the future research can conduct cross-sectional and longitudinal study to understand the in-depth individual disposition and factors needed for job aspects and organizational dynamics. It should be noted that the nature of job and work is constantly changing and evolving along with the priorities, goals and aspirations of the young generation thus proving to be a topic of discussion and research in upcoming days.

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