

Job Pursuit Intentions of Gen Y MBA Students: The Effects of Job and Organisational Attributes

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Abstract : *Today, organizations realize that people are the only real assets that provide them the competitive advantage in this dynamic business environment. The younger generation or the Gen Y is set to replace the older generation and for organizations it is challenging to manage a multi-generational workforce in this transitional phase. Young management graduates are also an important source of recruitment for organizations to fill entry level positions. These new entrants into the workforce come with expectations and characteristics distinct from the previous generations. Organizations aspiring to tap this talented workforce realize that they have to understand Gen Y's job aspirations and their perceived importance of job and organizational attributes, so that they can suitably promote their organization as a good place to work. An understanding of their expectations will help organizations develop strategies to attract and retain right talent from this promising applicant pool. This paper aims to explore the influence of the perceived importance level of Job and Organizational Attributes on Job Pursuit Intention of management students in India. In addition, differences among the male and female student segments in perceived importance level of the job and organizational attributes is also explored.*

Job and Organizational Attributes exhibited significant effects on Job Pursuit Intention. The factors “Job benefits” and “Challenging work” emerged as the most predominant predictor of Job pursuit Intention of management students. Further, individuals were more likely to pursue jobs in organizations which offered “Challenging work” and attractive “Job Benefits”. No significant gender differences in the study variables were observed.

Keywords : Gen Y, Management students, Job and Organizational Attributes, Job Pursuit Intention

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the changing business environment, human capital has become a strategic component of corporate success for organizations world over. Attracting and retaining the most talented employees is crucial for organizational success and survival. It is known that firms with perceived attractive Job and Organizational Attributes like reputation, interesting work, location, challenging work environment, attractive compensation and benefits attract more as well as higher

quality applicants (Turban and Cable, 2003, Smola and Sutton, 2002; Hess and Jepsen, 2009; Meier et al., 2010). In the recent decade, characteristics of the new entrants to the workforce - Gen Y individuals, their work related expectations and behavior, and potential consequences for human resource management (HRM) have been attracting attention. The distinctness of the Gen Y can be attributed to the new developments in the area of information and communication technologies and globalization affecting the young generation's characteristics and shaping their values. Thus, organizations and Human Resource Management professionals have started to focus their attention to understand the extent the job aspirations and expectations of the new cohorts or Gen Y – differ from the other generations already existing in the work force. The recent years have seen a lot of attention towards characteristics of Gen Y.

Understanding the factors leading to the intention to pursue a job with an organisation is critical for effective recruitment. The study proposes to investigate the factors of Job and Organisational Attributes that influences Gen Y management student applicants' intentions to pursue and apply for a job with an organization.

In India however, available research on the factors that affect jobseekers' job pursuit intention is sparse. If employers are to be successful in recruiting the Gen Y talent, it is important that they understand the expectations of these applicants.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It has been established that today, attracting and retaining superior human resources can provide firms with a sustained competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1994; Wright, Ferris, Hiller, & Kroll, 1995; Berthon et al., 2005). Organizations face a huge challenge of attracting and retaining the right talent given the changing nature of work and workforce driven by globalization, technology and changing demographics. Today's work place is characterized by workforce diversity of which generational diversity has attracted a lot of attention because organizations are struggling to manage a multi-generational workforce. The Gen Y or Millennials born after 1980 is rapidly entering the workforce (Smola & Sutton, 2002) and is predicted to constitute a large part of the labour pool.

Literature has established that different generations will be different in their aspirations, perceptions and expectations with regards to work. It is understood that each generation is unique as they share common experiences (Fernandez, 2009) and tends to develop a collective personality that influences the way members lead their lives, their attitudes, desires and expectations towards work and organizations (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Smola and Sutton, 2002; Helsen and Weston, 2006). Gen

Y are not only the largest generation but also have different values from their predecessors, the Generation X – individuals born between 1961 and 1981 as given by Strauss and Howe (1992) and Baby Boomers- individuals born between 1943 and 1960 (Twenge, 2010; Smola and Sutton, 2002). Past literature defines the beginning of Generation Y as early as 1977 and as late as 1981 and ending as early as 1994 and as late as 2002 (Erickson 2008; Karefalk, Petterssen and Zhu, 2007; Hagevik, 1999). Smola and Sutton (2002) define Generation Y as born between 1980 to 1994. For this study we focus on those Gen Y management students still pursuing their education and set to start their career. The year range defining Gen Y has been considered to be that of 1978 to 1994.

Recently, lot of studies have given attention to the characteristics, aspirations and expectations of this cohort to better understand and channelize their talent for organisational advantage (Erickson, 2008; Nagle, 1999; Meier et. al., 2010; Balderrama, 2007; Lloyd, 2007; Cruz 2007; Twenge, 2006; Twenge et. al., 2010; Ng. et. al., 2010). Scholars differ in the age range of this generation. Smola and Sutton (2002) explored the perceived differences between generational groups and found that the work values of Generation Xers were significantly different from those of the Baby Boomers and proposed that Generation Y will want even higher salaries, flexible working arrangements and more benefits than Generation X.

Scholars have described members of Generation Y as individualistic, technologically savvy, well-educated (Meier and Crocker, 2010; Erickson 2008; Valentine and Power, 2013), independent, self-reliant, sophisticated, mature, and structured (Syrett and Lammiman, 2003).

Organizations' perceived image as an employer has been identified as one of the main determinants of job seekers' attraction to organizations (Highhouse et al., 1999; Berthon et al, 2005). Employer image consists of individuals' perceptions of the Job and Organizational attributes what is attractive and important to them (Turban et al., 1993; Phillips et al., 1994; Ngand Burke, 2006; Sutherland 2012).

A substantial number of studies on job attribute preferences of graduate students are available (e.g. Chew and Teo, 1993; Turban et al., 1993; Phillips et al. 1994; Konrad et al., 2000; Jusoh et al., 2011; Sutherland, 2012). Past studies reveal that organizational attraction was influenced by applicants' perceptions of job and organizational characteristics such as pay, opportunities for advancement, location, (Cable & Graham, 2000; Highhouse, Zickar, Thorsteinson, Stierwalt, & Slaughter, 1999; Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997; Lievens, Decaesteker, Coetsier, & Geimaert, 2001; Turban & Keon, 1993). Literature also establish that the most common preferred Job and Organizational attributes by prospective job applicants

are attractive compensation and pay, job security, opportunities for advancement or developmental opportunities (Turban et al., 1993; Chew and Teo, 1993; Phillips et al., 1994; Turban et al., 1998; Tolbert and Moen, 1998; Chapman et al., 2005; Berthon et al., 2005; Ng et al., 2006; Terjesen, et al., 2007; Gomes and Neves, 2011; Sutherland, 2012). Apart from these, challenging job (Chew and Teo, 1993; Phillips et al., 1994; Ng et al., 2006; Gomes and Neves, 2011), Location (Chew and Teo, 1993; Turban, 1993; Phillips et al., 1994; , Organizational reputation (Chew and Teo, 1993; Phillips et al., 1994), Opportunities to travel abroad (Chew and Teo, 1993; Ng et al., 2006; Terjesen, et al., 2007 and work relationship (Chew and Teo, 1993; Turban et al., 1993; Berthon et al., 2005; Ng et al., 2006; Terjesen, et al., 2007; Sutherland, 2012) were most studied job and organizational attributes. Barber et al., (1999) reported that job seekers have distinctive preferences regarding firm size, and that preferred firm size is related to job search behavior. Job Pursuit Intention was found to be related to pay by Aiman-Smith et al. (2001).

Bigoness (1988) identified three primary preferred job attribute dimensions through factor analysis (1) professional growth; (2) work environment; and (3) salary. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) explored the most important factors in attracting right people to an organization wherein they studied brand symbolic image model and organizational attributes and concluded that symbolic attribute trait images which is subjective in nature have incremental value over instrumental job and organizational attributes (objective).

In the past studies job attribute preferences are categorized as being either “extrinsic” relating to materialistic fulfilment or “intrinsic” which is described as fulfilling often higher order needs, such as self-determination, self-expression etc. (Konrad et al., 2000). However, as categorization of some job attributes is difficult, the researcher may choose own perspective and re-categories to suit the study (Sutherland, 2012).

Extensive studies are also available on gender differences in job attribute preferences (e.g. Allen et al., 1979; Bigoness, 1988; Chew and Teo, 1993; Konrad, 2000; Terjesen et al. 2007; Gokuladas, 2010; Sutherland, 2012). Alniaçık, E. and Alniaçık, U. (2012) in their study indicated significant differences between the perceived levels of importance of employer attractiveness dimensions concerning the gender of the respondents, but no significant differences in terms of age or the current employment status of respondents.

Job Pursuit Intention refers to “the intention to pursue a job to remain in the applicant pool” (Chapman et al., 2005, p. 929). Identifying the predictors of Job Pursuit Intention will provide important insights for understanding the factors

that predict the young applicants' behavioral intentions. There have been no studies that have clearly established what the most relevant job characteristics for predicting Job Pursuit Intention. The principal objective of this study is therefore to identify the factors of Job and Organizational Attributes that influence the Job Pursuit Intention of Gen Y management students. Further, the study also explores gender differences in the factors of Job and Organizational Attributes.

Thus, the study investigated the following research questions -

1. What are the preferred factors of Job and Organizational attributes of Gen Y MBA students?
2. Which factors of Job and Organizational attributes influence the Job Pursuit Intention of Gen Y MBA students?
3. Do male and female respondents differ in their preferences of factors of Job and Organizational attributes?

The related Hypotheses of the study are as follows:

H1: Factors of Job and Organizational Attributes are positively related with Job Pursuit Intention

H2: Male and Female respondents will differ in their preferences of factors of Job and Organizational Attributes

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

The participants are Generation Y full-time MBA students of Management institutes in Coimbatore who are set to enter the job market. Data was collected using a questionnaire through a survey of 18 randomly selected colleges of the 71 institutes offering MBA programme in Coimbatore. 550 questionnaires were distributed, of which 483 were usable. Of the respondents 51.6% and 48.4% female, and 94.4% of them belonged to the age group of 20-25 years. Almost all the respondents were unmarried i.e. 96.1% and majority (81.4%) of them did not have work experience with only 10.2% having work experience as is typical of higher studies in India where most of the individuals pursue their education before working.

Factor Analysis, Correlation, Multiple regression, Structural Equation Modelling and ANOVA were used to arrive at the results.

Measures

This particular questionnaire consists of three sections. The first section of the questionnaire is composed of items about demographic characteristics such as gender, age, work experience and marital status. The second section measures the extent to which the Job and Organizational Attributes are preferred by the respondents. Respondents are asked to mention the company they aspire to work for and respond to the items in the questionnaire by considering to what extent they perceive their dream company to have these Job and Organizational Attributes. The items in the third section measure the Job Pursuit Intention of the respondents.

The responses to second section and third section are collected on a seven point Likert scale. Responses to the second section ranged from 1= strongly disagree, through 7 = strongly agree and the third section on 1= not important and 7=extremely important.

Factors of Job and Organizational Attributes

Job and Organizational attributes are measured with 16 items adapted from various studies through review of literature. Items include “Job Security”; “Challenging work”, “Financially strong company”, “Location of organization in a big city”. To identify the factors, Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation and a factor extraction according to the MINEIGEN criterion (i.e. all factors with eigenvalues of greater than 1) is employed. Scale reliability is assessed by internal consistency using Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient. Examination of the descriptive statistics showed that the research data is appropriate for factor analysis (KMO = 0.883; Bartlett’s test of sphericity $p < 0.001$). Principal component analysis resulted in four factors of Job and Organizational Attributes, which explained 57.458% of the total variation in the data. The first factor was named “Reputation” and had 4 items, $\alpha = 0.797$; second factor “Work” had 5 items, $\alpha = 0.711$; the third factor named “Career Benefits” had 4 items, $\alpha = 0.676$ and finally the fourth factor “Location” had 3 items, $\alpha = 0.760$. The results have been summarized in Table 1.

Job Pursuit Intention

The nine item scale was developed by adapting five items from the study of Highhouse et al. (2003) and four items from Taylor and Bergman(1987) and Robertson et al. (2005). Items include: “If this Company invited me for a Job interview, I would go”, “If I were searching for a job, I would apply to this organization”. The reliability of this measure is 0.843.

Analysis and Results

Data Analyses is performed in SPSS spreadsheet after coding the questionnaires. Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation and a factor extraction according to the MINEIGEN criterion (i.e. all factors with eigenvalues of greater than 1) resulted in four factors. These factors impacting career choice explained 57.458% of the total variation in the data. The results are reported in Table 1.

Table 1 Job and Organizational Attributes Principal Component Analysis Results

Scale Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor Loading	Eigen Values	% Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha
Factor 1:Reputation, M = 5.759						
Market Success	5.778	1.187	.763	5.270	16.834	0.797
Financially strong	5.693	1.139	.752			
Recognizable company brand	5.741	1.126	.694			
Good reputation among family and friends	5.735	1.110	.665			
Factor 2 :Work, M = 5.732						
Challenging Work	6.137	1.570	1.024	1.669	15.022	0.711
Innovative employer	5.623	1.661	1.164			
Values your creativity	5.692	1.437	1.146			
High level of responsibility	5.692	1.352	1.119			
Control over working Hours	5.518	1.277	1.277			
Factor 3: Career Benefits, M = 5.698						
Springboard for future Development	5.627	1.059	.737	1.147	12.987	0.676
Attractive overall compensation package	5.687	1.114	.601			
Gaining Career Enhancing Exp	5.699	1.199	.589			
Job Security	5.776	1.136	.604			
Factor 4: Location, M = 5.413						
Location close to friends	5.490	1.300	.845	1.107	12.615	0.760
Location near family home town	5.275	1.407	.819			
Location in Big cities	5.474	1.322	.647			
Overall					57.458	0.857

The table also reveals that the respondents rate Challenging work the highest indicating their preference for Challenging work higher than other Job and Organizational Work. This is in line with the previous studies that indicate that challenging work is preferred by the young job applicants (Turban and Cable, 2003; Smola and Sutton, 2002; Hess and Jepsen, 2009; Meier et al., 2010).

Table 2 Mean, Standard Deviation and Intercorrelation of the composite variables

		Mean	Std. Dev	1	2	3	4	5
1	Reputation	5.7588	.89969	1				
2	Work	5.7321	.77921	.533**	1			
3	Location	5.4134	1.10430	.424**	.299**	1		
4	Career Benefits	5.6977	.80325	.514**	.540**	.309**	1	
5	Job Pursuit Intention	5.8631	.82564	.410**	.486**	.169**	.618**	1

Note: N = 483

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Pearson correlations were also calculated between factors of Job and Organizational Attributes and Job Pursuit Intention to find out which Factors were significantly associated with Job Pursuit Intention and to what extent. The results showed that all the four factors of Job and Organizational Attributes were significantly positively correlated with Job Pursuit Intention. Of factors of Job and Organizational Attributes, “Career Benefits” was more highly correlated with Job Pursuit Intention ($r = 0.618$; $p < 0.01$) than others and “Work” was also highly correlated with Job Pursuit Intention ($r = 0.446$; $p < 0.01$). The research hypothesis is supported that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between the set of independent variables and the dependent variable.

The results reveal the importance of career benefits to young Gen Y graduates as is evident by its strong significant relationship with Job pursuit Intention.

Table 3.1 Regression Analysis: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.618 ^a	.382	.380	.64990
2	.644 ^b	.414	.412	.63312

a. Predictors: (Constant), Career Benefits

b. Predictors: (Constant), Career Benefits, Work

Table 3.1 reports the results of linear multiple regression stepwise analysis. The table shows the variables that are included in the model at each step. “Career Benefits” is the single best predictor (step 1) and accounted for 38.01% of the variance. “Work” is the next best predictor (added the most), after “Career Benefits” as is shown included in the model (step 2) and both accounted for 41.4% of the variance. “Reputation” and “Location” is not included in model, it is thus inferred that they are not significant predictors of Job Pursuit Intention.

The results thus reveal that young management students’ consider benefits associated with a job and work related attributes as important when pursuing a job with an organization of their choice. Contrary to the theory they do not seem to be impacted by reputation of the organization or location when actively pursuing job with an organization. Though correlation shows significant association, reputation of the organization and location do not seem to predict job pursuit intention of these Gen Y MBA students.

Table 3.2 Coefficients a of Regression model

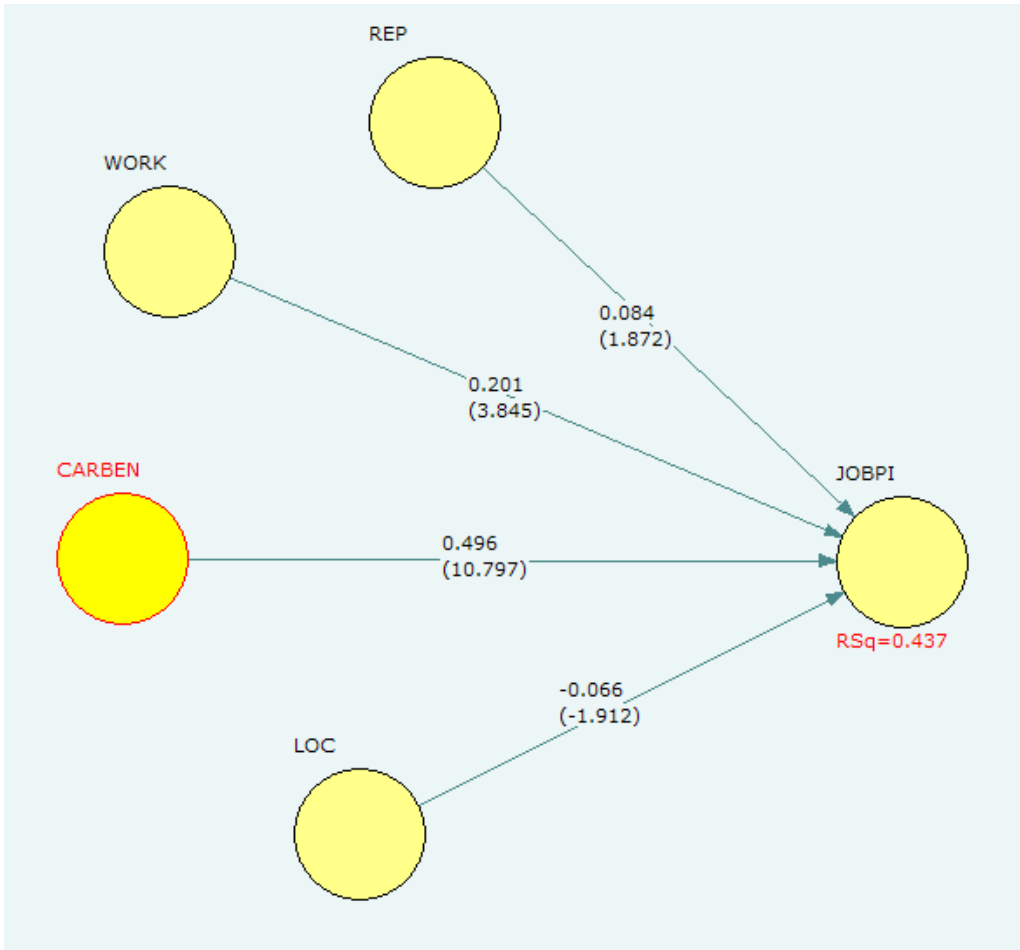
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.245	.212		10.587	.000
	Career Benefits	.635	.037	.618	17.231	.000
2	(Constant)	1.620	.239		6.768	.000
	Career Benefits	.516	.043	.502	12.084	.000
	Work	.228	.044	.215	5.179	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Job Pursuit Intention

This table gives beta coefficients for the regression equation. The equation from model 2 is as given below:

$$\text{Predicted Job Pursuit Intention} = 1.620 + .516 (\text{Career Benefits}) + .228 (\text{Work})$$

Figure 1



Legend of the terms used in model

REP	:	Reputation
WORK	:	Work
CARBEN	:	Career Benefits
LOC	:	Own Education
JOBPI	:	Job Pursuit Intention

From the above figure it is seen that the factors of Job and Organizational Attractiveness has an R2 value of 0.437 which means that the three factors explain 43.7% of the variability in Job Pursuit Intention. The t statistic values given in the parentheses of the paths indicate the path validity and signify the importance of the influence of the exogenous constructs on the endogenous constructs. The values are given in Table. It is reported that the factors of Job and Organizational Attributes “Career Benefits” and “Work” are strongly associated with Job Pursuit

Intention that is the t values are significant at 95% confidence level. The factor “Location” is also significantly associated but negatively. The factor “Reputation” is not significantly related with Job Pursuit Intention.

This is in line with the regression analysis which had revealed Job pursuit intention being impacted strongly by Career benefits. Work also is has a strong impact. However, location negatively impacts Job pursuit intention, indicating that respondents with a strong preference for location will not actively pursue job with an organization if the organization is not situated in their preferred location even if it is the organization of their choice.

Table 4 Structural Model—BootStrap

	Entire Sample estimate	Mean of Subsamples	Standard error	T-Statistic	Sig
WORK->JOBPI	0.2010	0.2002	0.0523	3.8450	S
CARBEN->JOBPI	0.4960	0.4948	0.0459	10.7971	S
LOC->JOBPI	-0.0660	-0.0639	0.0345	-1.9121	NS
REP->JOBPI	0.0840	0.0868	0.0449	1.8717	NS

S denotes $p < 0.01$

Table gives the path co-efficient values and the related ‘T’ statistics which test the significance of the path co-efficient and the extent of relationships between the constructs. Results indicate that the path co-efficient of “Work” on “Job Pursuit Intention” (beta = 0.2010, T = 3.8450, $p < 0.01$), implicating that “Work” significantly influences Job Pursuit Intention. The path co-efficients between “Career Benefits” and Job Pursuit Intention are - beta = 0.4960, T = 10.7971, $p < 0.01$ indicating a significant influence of “Career Benefits” on Job Pursuit Intention. The model also reveals that the path co-efficient between “Location” and Job Pursuit Intention (beta = - 0.0660, T = -1.9121, $p > 0.01$), are not significant and the negative sign indicates negative association. “Reputation” also does not have path validity as revealed by the co-efficient (beta = 0.0840, T = 1.8717, $p < 0.01$). The R2 value (0.437) indicates the extent to which the four factors of Job and Organizational Attributes influence Job Pursuit Intention and it is established that these independent variables explain 43.7% of the variation in Job Pursuit Intention.

Table 5 Gender Differences

		N	Mean	Std Dev	F	Sig.
Reputation	Male	249	5.7279	.05423	.605	.437
	Female	234	5.7917	.06177		
Work	Male	249	5.7189	.78206	.148	.701
	Female	234	5.7462	.77759		
Location	Male	249	5.3588	1.06457	1.258	.263
	Female	234	5.4715	1.14449		
Career Benefits	Male	249	5.6325	.81876	3.402	.066
	Female	234	5.7671	.78220		

The results of ANOVA to test for gender differences in the Job and Organizational Attribute preferences resulted in no significant differences among students. Thus, the Hypotheses 2 is not accepted.

Discussion

The results of the study reinforces earlier studies that compared to the previous generations, this cohort is characterized by materialistic, and consumer culture because of the advancements in technology (Hanzaee and Aghasibeig, 2010). Literature has reported strong evidence of the significance of remuneration and compensation to Gen Y individuals (Meier et. al., 2010). Gen Y demand high compensation (Smola and Sutton, 2002; Hess and Jepsen, 2009). Location of the workplace does not seem to impact the job choice decision of the students. Meier et. al (2010) note that due to the technological advances this generation is more open to working anywhere, even have no problem working away from home, they easily accept travelling. The results had revealed a strong significant relationship between career benefits and job pursuit intention supporting the recent studies that demonstrated that Millennials rate extrinsic rewards higher than Gen X or Baby Boomers, while rating intrinsic work values lower than all other generations (Twenge et. al., 2010; Jurciwiz 2000). Ng et. al., (2010) note from a number of different surveys finding that Millennials consider salary as the most important motivator. Results also show strong relationship of students with work related attributes, like challenging work, control over working hours and a work environment that encourages creativity and innovation. Meier et. al (2010) also note in their study note that Gen Y individuals seek challenging tasks and have a yearning to learn by working with the employees around them.

Recent studies have reported mixed results in terms of gender differences in Job and organisational attribute preferences where a substantial literature from previous studies demonstrate gender differences in job attribute preferences (Bigoness, 1988; Phillips et al. 1994; Prabudyal et al. 2004; Gokuladas, 2010; Sutherland, 2012) and on the other hand a number of studies revealed no gender difference in the initial career stages, Agarwala (2008) established no gender differences in career choice and orientation. Therefore though the findings of the study were not consistent in terms of past studies that establish traditional gender roles (for example: Hardin et al., 2006). Dyke and Murphy (2006) and Ng et al. (2008) who reported that men focused more on material success and less on relationships than women even at similar occupational attainments, the findings are in line with recent studies that report similar pattern in the initial career stage of men and women. Thus, companies realize that to fit Gen Y to their company, they must understand and adapt to these trends to ensure that they are perceived as a desirable place to pursue a career (Yeaton, 2008).

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The main limitation of the study is the generalizability of the results, as the findings are restricted MBA students from one geographical location and cannot be generalized to students from different regions, cultural and economic background. The results also cannot be extended to other disciplines as other factors such as education, skills and abilities and may vary from those applicable to business studies.

As the study is confined to one part of India, care should be taken in relating the results to global context. In India majority of the students pursuing MBA have no work experience. The study outcomes may therefore not be applicable to more experienced workers. Many of the factors found to have relationships with variables related to job and organizational attributes have strong cultural influences. Therefore, the potential importance of cultural values and expectations in job choices cannot be underscored.

The research can be extended to include students of other areas of disciplines and professional courses, and geographical location. Future research involving aspects of cultural differences with respect to students from different regions would provide further insight into those factors influencing the decision of undergraduate students with respect to their first career. Working executives in their various career stages can also be studied.

Generation Y presents a challenge to managers who must train and motivate this next generation of employees so that their strengths become a benefit to the company. For years to come it will be a challenge for managers to understand new generations as they move into the work force. To be successful in the future, it will be important for companies and managers to understand these new employees. The findings of the study have attempted to give an understanding of the Generation Y management students' preferences of Job and Organizational attribute preferences.

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