

Work Values & Job Attitudes: A Study of Gen Y in Public Sector

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Entry of Generation Y (Gen Y) employees into the workforce has challenged the conventional managerial practices in organizations. Characteristics of Gen Y are in sharp contrast with the way public sector organizations function. Gen Y is fast, independent, and desires flexible work environment. Public sector organizations, on the other hand, are mostly bound by rigid rules and regulations laid down by the government. This study investigates the differing work values, workplace behaviors, and job attitudes of Gen Y working in public sector organizations. Results indicate that Indian Gen Y employed in the public sector give more importance to extrinsic and power/prestige work values, and their intention to leave the organization is not correlated to commitment.

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Introduction

Demographics of workplace have seen a sea change by the turn of 21st century with employees belonging to different generations working together. The current workforce is therefore known as Multi-Generational as it consists of all the generations – from Baby Boomers¹ to Generation X² (Gen X), and Generation Y³ (Gen Y) (Rai, 2015), and they co-exist in both public as well as private sector organizations. Although public sector organizations in India have knowledgeable and highly experienced personnel, a large number of them are approaching retirement age. Hence, in order to fill the hierarchy gaps being created in the near future, organizations are in the process of recruiting bright and young officers in large numbers to overcome the need for competent workforce in future.

¹ Baby Boomers – People born between 1946 and 1964 (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005)

² Generation X – People born between 1965 and 1982 (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005)

³ Generation Y – People born between 1982 and 1991 (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005)

As compared to their older counterparts, young officers (Gen Y) are independent (Crampton & Hodge, 2009), fast and energetic, and have high expectations from their organizations in terms of salary and flexibility in work environment (Wailand, 2015). Public sector organizations in India, on the other hand, are bound by rules and regulations set by the government and they function at their own pace and modus operandi. Therefore, understanding the work value preferences of Gen Y, determining the factors impacting their job attitudes, and identifying what motivates them to join and continue working with public sector organizations are of critical importance.

Gen Y in Public Sector

Studies have documented various reasons why Gen Y is attracted to careers in the public sector. According to Ng and Gossett (2013), Gen Y who prefer public sector jobs, prioritize work-life balance, opportunities and avenues for higher education, and scope for contributing to the society as important career goals. In India, public sector organizations are considered more stable as these are supported by the government even during difficult economic downturn periods as compared to the private sector organizations (Jain & Bhatt, 2015). Hence, Gen Y in India prefer working

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with public sector organizations for stability and security, maintaining a healthy work-life balance, having better leave structure (Jain & Bhatt, 2015), and less workload and stress as compared to the private sector organizations (Mohapatra et al., 2017).

However, public sector organizations are facing tough competition due to privatization, liberalization, and globalization. Hence, to be commercially viable and competitive, these organizations must perform their best, and in order to be successful, they must ensure that the young recruits become productive employees. Given the various reasons for Gen Y joining public sector and the need for public sector organizations to have young employees, it becomes imperative as well as interesting to understand the work values, commitment level, and other job attitudes (like job satisfaction, turnover intention, and felt obligation) of Gen Y as it would define their workplace behavior and impact the overall organizational success.

Work Values

Values that get satisfied as a result of employee's participation in the work are called work values (Brown, 2002). Most of the researchers have identified three types of work values:

1. *Intrinsic*– Intangible work outcomes that can be satisfied during the course of work like growth, higher achievement, positive career outcomes (Choi et al., 2013).

2. *Extrinsic*– Tangible work outcomes, like remuneration and job security (Papavasileiou & Lyons, 2015).

3. *Social or Interpersonal*– Values related to emotions, feelings, and social experiences, like esteem, interpersonal relationships, and contribution to society (Papavasileiou & Lyons, 2015).

Ros et al. (1999) have suggested a fourth value:

4. *Power and Prestige*– Values that indicate personal superiority, like achievement, status, recognition, independence.

Research on Gen Y in public sector has emphasized their preferences for a liberated career, work-life balance, and extrinsic over intrinsic rewards (Ertas, 2015). Likewise, Yadav and Chaudhari (2018) established that extrinsic work values are more important than intrinsic values for Gen Y working in public sector. However, Perry et al. (2010) postulate that public sector employees are motivated more by intrinsic rewards. Results of a recent study by Yadav and Chaudhari (2020) have indicated that intrinsic, extrinsic, and prestige/power work values are the most important elements for Indian Gen Y to make a career decision. However, their preference for job security and healthy work-life balance attracts them towards public sector jobs (Yadav & Chaudhari, 2020). Satyawadi and Ghosh (2012) postulated that public sector employees in India value self-esteem and pride, job involvement, and progressing up the career ladder. Chawla et al. (2017) posited that Gen Y in India pre-

fer working with organizations that are in alignment with their educational qualifications, aptitudes, and career aspirations.

Like work values guide an employee's preferences for work and work environment, organizations look forward to productive and committed employees for the overall organizational success. Therefore alongside work values, affective commitment is another important aspect which organizations look at for understanding the workplace behavior of young employees.

Affective Commitment

Commitment to remain with an organization is characterized by different mindsets or motives. When employees remain with the organization because they want to do so, it is called affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Since commitment is an intention to persist in a course of action, lack of it among public sector employees can inhibit the organizational effectiveness. This is because lower commitment will lead to reduced effort and also increased absenteeism on part of the employees (Lediju, 2016). As Indian public sector organizations invest considerable time and resources into recruitment and training processes, it is important for these organizations to instill and elicit strong commitment from the employees in order to achieve stability, reduce attrition and minimize the recruitment and training costs. However, commitment to an extent is also dependent on the attitude towards job.

Job Attitude – Job Satisfaction

Researchers have found different results regarding job satisfaction among public sector employees. Some indicate that job satisfaction is higher in public sector organizations because of job security, healthy work-life balance, assured and consistent pay hike, and steady career progression (Markovits et al., 2007; Agarwal & Sajid, 2017), whereas others indicate it to be lower. In fact, the results of a study by Wang et al. (2012) show that the public sector employees have low extrinsic job satisfaction (because of rigidity in work process, less autonomy in work, and lower salary) but a high intrinsic job satisfaction because of their being in public service. Therefore, it is crucial for the public sector organizations to keep their young employees satisfied at work so that they do not leave the organization after a few years of service, because, if the Gen Y do not plan to stay with the organizations for long, the replacement and knowledge costs are going to be very high (Ertas, 2015).

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Job Attitude – Turnover Intention

According to Sousa-Poza and Henneberger (2004), “turnover intention reflects the (subjective) probabilit-

ity that an individual will change his or her job within a certain time period.” Researchers like Wang et al. (2012) and Agarwal and Sajid (2017) have recognized that turnover intentions of public sector employees are lower than private sector employees’ because public sector offers employment that is more secure and has low conflicting roles. However, Ertas (2015) established that public sector employees from Gen Y are more likely to leave their jobs and have a desire to switch to another government job than their older counterparts. To the Gen Y, job satisfaction matters the most and as it decreases, turnover intention increases. Therefore, it is important for organizations to consider values, needs, and preferences of young employees to ensure a satisfied and permanently productive workforce, which may otherwise lead to increased attrition.

Job Attitude – Felt Obligation

According to the social exchange theory, employees comprehend that if the organization cares for them in terms of supervisory support, well-being, provide growth opportunities, and is fair in the evaluation process (like fixing pay, perks and promotions), they too would in turn reciprocate through increased commitment and take an active interest in the growth of the organization. This positive attitude of employees of being obliged to reciprocate to their organization in exchange for the concern and support shown by the organization is termed felt obligation (Rai, 2015).

Work Values & Affective Commitment

Various researchers have linked the relationship between work values and affective commitment. In their study on young employees working in Indian public sector organizations, Chaudhari and Rupavataram (2015) found that work values are positively related to commitment. Since public sector organizations offer manifold benefits and security, the employees become emotionally attached and committed to their organizations (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017). Hence, as employee work values match the organizational values, affective commitment is expected to increase. Based on this perspective, we propose the following hypothesis:

- Hypothesis 1 (H1): There is direct and positive relationship between Gen Y work values and affective commitment.

Work Values, Affective Commitment & Felt Obligation

Public sector employment is considered to provide a safe, secure, stable and lucrative career to its employees (Niedosik, 2014; Markovits et al., 2007). Hence, people get attracted towards public sector jobs irrespective of their innate interest. It also encourages them to remain committed to the organization and have a sense of obligation to repay for the concern and support provided to them. This implies that affective commitment increases as individual work values match with that of the organization,

and it is then reciprocated by felt obligation.

Hence, we propose the following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 2 (H2): There is a direct and positive relationship between Gen Y work values and felt obligation.
- Hypothesis 3 (H3): There is a direct and positive relationship between Gen Y affective commitment and felt obligation.
- Hypothesis 4 (H4): When mediated by affective commitment, there is an indirect and positive relationship between Gen Y work values and felt obligation.

Work Values, Affective Commitment, Job Satisfaction & Turnover Intention

Research in the sphere of work values have found that work values have a significant impact on job satisfaction, and there is a positive relationship between the individual elements of job satisfaction and employees' organizational commitment (Froese & Xiao, 2012). In public sector organizations too, work values are positively related to job satisfaction (Chaudhari & Rupatvataram, 2015). According to Shore & Tetrick (1994), an employee seeking long-term employment

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is more likely to form a stronger relational contract (long-term loyalty) with his/her organization. This contract improves the employment relationship and leads to lower turnover intention among the public sector employees (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017). Since public sector organizations primarily offer good salary and perks, and job security to the employees, they become committed towards their organizations. Hence in view of the above, following hypotheses have been developed.

- Hypothesis 5 (H5): There is a direct and positive relationship between Gen Y work values and job satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 6 (H6): When mediated by affective commitment, there is an indirect and positive relationship between Gen Y work values and job satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 7 (H7): When mediated by affective commitment, there is an indirect and negative relationship between Gen Y work values and turnover intention.

Affective Commitment, Turnover Intention, Job Satisfaction & Felt Obligation

Relationship between affective commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intention has been established by early researches. Agarwal and Sajid (2017) in their research on Indian public and private sector employees established that affective commitment is strongly and positively related to job satisfaction. Employees having high level of affective

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commitment are likely to continue working with their organization for a longer period of time and are more satisfied with the job (Meyer & Allen, 2004). If an employee is committed towards his/her organization and relates well with its values and goals, there are lesser chances for him/her to exhibit withdrawal behavior (Rai & Mukherjee, 2017).

According to a study by Nasiru et al. (2014) on public sector employees in Ghana, older employees are more affectively committed towards their organization than the younger employees. Their study also found that more the tenure of an employee in an organization, greater would be his/her commitment. Since, public sector jobs offer job security, and healthy work-life balance, employees in the public sector usually have lower turnover intention (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017). We propose:

- Hypothesis 8 (H8): There is a direct and negative relationship between Gen Y Affective Commitment and Turnover Intention.
- Hypothesis 9 (H9): There is a direct and positive relationship between Gen Y Affective Commitment and Job Satisfaction.

Sample

The research sample for this study consists of the Direct Recruit Adminis-

trative Officers of the Indian public sector non-life insurance organizations who completed one to seven years of service. 24% of the respondents were females and 76% were males, and the average age of the respondents was 26 years. Data for the study were collected in two phases and the final number of respondents was 188.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy test was done and the KMO statistical values vary between 0 and 1. Values between 0.8 and 0.9 are great, and values above 0.9 are superb (Field, 2009). KMO value for the data was 0.832.

Procedure

In Phase I, data were collected through standardized scales developed on Google docs that was emailed to 385 Administrative Officers (respondents) and shared in the hard form with 53 Administrative Officers who attended a training program at National Insurance Academy, Pune during the year 2018-19. Completed anonymous responses (from 168 respondents) were returned to the authors directly for analysis. There were also a few reverse questions that were added to check the attention of the respondents. Phase II involved telephonic interviews with 20 of the respondent Administrative Officers to discuss and interpret the survey results.

Measures

- Work Values – The scale (Super 1962;1973) comprised 13 items re-

lating to different aspects of Work Values.

- Affective Commitment – The Mowday et al. (1979) scale was adapted to understand the individual commitment of the respondents towards the organization, and it comprised 5 items.
- Felt Obligation – The scale (Eisenberger et al., 2001) comprised 3 items.
- Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention – The Warr et al. (1979) scale was adapted to understand the employee’s intention ‘to quit from’ or ‘to stay with’ the organization, and it comprised 6 and 3 items respectively.

Cronbach-Alpha, which is the most common method of reliability testing for a survey was calculated in SPSS Version 24. Overall reliability (Cronbach-Alpha) for the standardized scale came out to be 0.87, indicating that most of the items have high internal consistency. Cronbach-Alpha for each measure is given in Table 1.

Table 1 Cronbach-Alpha

Measure	Cronbach-Alpha
Work Values	0.88
Affective Commitment	0.67
Felt Obligation	0.71
Job Satisfaction	0.83
Turnover Intention	0.64

For all scales, except affective commitment and turnover intention, Cronbach-Alpha was above the commonly used threshold of 0.70 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The lower Cronbach-

Alpha value for affective commitment and turnover intention could be because of the less number of questions for those constructs (3 questions respectively for affective commitment and turnover intention, 5 or more questions for others).

Data Analysis & Results

For analysis of the data, SPSS version 24 and Amos version 23.0 were used whereby relationship was established among the variables under study. The effect of mediation among the latent variables was investigated based on Structural Equation Modelling. Factor Analysis was done and the highest loading items (having factor loading of more than 0.65) were considered for the final Structural Model. 6 out of 13 items of work values; 2 out of 5 items of affective commitment; 2 out of 3 items of felt obligation, 3 out of 6 items of job satisfaction, and 2 out of 3 items of turnover intention had factor loading of

more than 0.65 and were considered in the final structural model for analysis. Nine hypotheses were formulated, and path coefficients were calculated to test the hypotheses. This study is similar to a research conducted on Gen Y employees working in private sector (Rai, 2015), to identify if there is any difference in results with respect to Gen Y working in public sector organizations in India.

Structural Equation Modelling was used to fit the hypothesized model. Latent variables, i.e., work values, affective commitment, felt obligation, job satisfaction and turnover intention were linked to their corresponding observed variables. Hair et al. (2015) have suggested the criteria for model fit indices. Actual values of the model fit indices are indicated in Table 2, and the chi-square values are indicated in Table 3. Conceptual diagram of the structural model is depicted in Fig. 1

Table 2 Model Fit Indices

Test	Target Value Criteria	Actual Value of Model
X ² /df	< 3	1.313
Goodness of Fit (GFI)	> 0.90	0.926
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.08	0.043
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0 < NFI < 1	0.888
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	> 0.95	0.970
Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	> 0.95	0.960
Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI)	> 0.50	0.668
Parsimony Comparative Fit Index (PCFI)	> 0.50	0.730

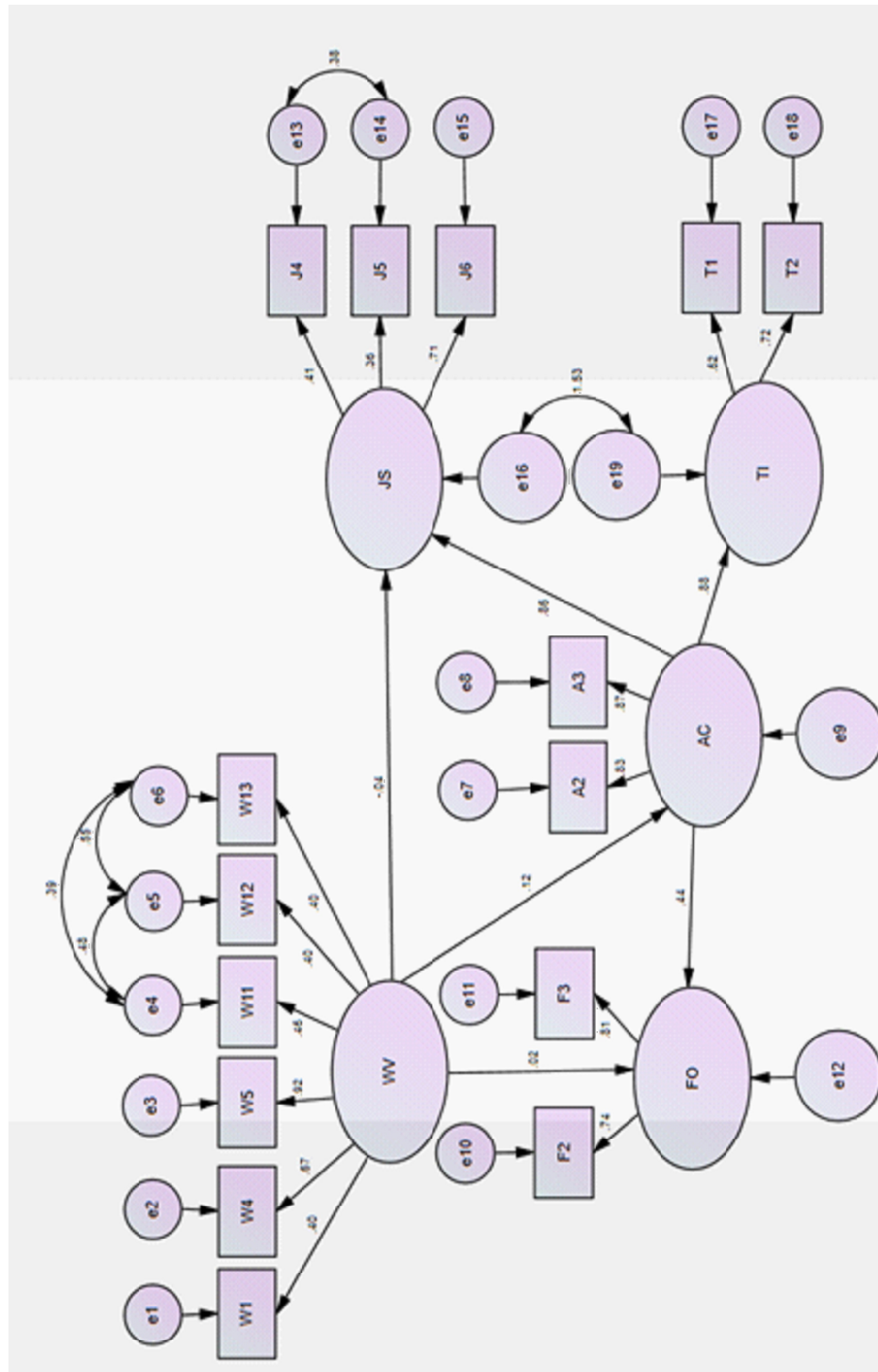
Source: Hair et al. (2015)

Table 3 Chi-Square Values

	Value
Chi – square (χ^2)	103.705
Degree of Freedom (df)	79
P value, significant at p<0.01	0.000

The relationship analysis of the Structural Model did not reveal any statistically significant relationship between work values and Affective Commitment ($\beta=0.124$, ns), Work values and job satisfaction ($\beta=-0.040$, ns), work values and felt obligation ($\beta=0.024$, ns).

Fig. 1 Path Diagram



(WV= Work Values, FO= Felt Obligation, AC= Affective Commitment, JS= Job Satisfaction, TI= Turnover Intention)

- Hence hypotheses 1, 2, and 5 are rejected.

Relationship between affective commitment and felt obligation ($\beta=0.445$, $p<0.01$), and affective commitment and job satisfaction ($\beta=0.861$, $p<0.01$) showed a positive and statistically significant result. However, there is a significant but positive relationship between affective commitment and turnover intention ($\beta=0.877$, $p<0.01$).

- Therefore, hypotheses H3, and H9 are accepted; but Hypothesis H8 is rejected.

H4 predicted the mediating effect of affective commitment between work values and felt obligation. Results showed significant relationship between affective commitment and felt obligation ($\beta=0.445$, $p<0.01$), but insignificant relationship between work values and affective commitment ($\beta=0.124$, ns). Moreover, affective commitment is not a mediator between work values and felt obligation.

- Therefore, hypothesis H4 is rejected.

H6 predicted the mediating effect of affective commitment between work values and job satisfaction. Although there is significant relationship between affective commitment and job satisfaction ($\beta=0.861$, $p<0.01$), there is no significant relationship between work values and affective commitment ($\beta=0.124$, ns). Hence, affective commitment is not a mediator between work values and job satisfaction.

- Therefore, hypothesis H6 is rejected.

H7 predicted the mediating effect of affective commitment between work values and turnover intention. Significant relationship was found between affective commitment and turnover intention ($\beta=0.877$, $p<0.01$). However, there is an insignificant relationship between work values and affective commitment ($\beta=0.124$, ns).

- Therefore, hypothesis H7 is also rejected.

Discussion & Conclusion

This research investigates the relationship between work values, workplace behaviors like affective commitment, and the effect of all of these on job attitudes, like job satisfaction, turnover intention, and felt obligation. The research focused exclusively on Gen Y employees working in non-life public sector insurance companies in India. Limiting the sample exclusively to one type of industry helps to control the variables that are related to the type of work one does (e.g., education, income, and general socio-economic status), which may confound observed value differences (Lyons et al., 2006).

The results of the study indicate that there is a positive relationship between work values and affective commitment, but it is not significant ($\beta=0.124$, ns). Employment in the public sector offers a stable and secure job, less work pressure, good salary and perks with assured regular pay increase, and stable career progression. Hence, employees who give

Employees who give more importance to specific work values are neutral about their commitment to the organization.

more importance to specific work values are neutral about their commitment to the organization. Therefore, in order to promote affective commitment to the organization, employee competence and organizational growth-needs must be ensured (Chaudhari & Rupavataram, 2015). It was evident from the results of data analysis that Gen Y in public sector give more importance to extrinsic values (good benefits and satisfactory salary) and power/prestige (gaining prestige, having a respectable position in the society) work values. These results were also confirmed during the Phase II interviews of the research wherein 70% of the surveyed employees (14 out of 20) stated that they value good benefits and salary, and 60% (12 out of 20) mentioned that they look for power, position, respect and recognition from their organization.

Affective commitment is related to being emotionally attached to one's organization. In the study on public sector organizations, the surveyed employees (respondents) do not feel an emotional attachment to their organizations as benefits and perks are common across the sectors; hence a specific attachment cannot be formed with a particular organization. Their outlook and expectations from their organization are more on normative and continuance-oriented commitment, like good benefits, salary, career

growth, respect, and prestige. As long as the organization is able to support them in advancing these values, they prefer to continue with the organization.

For Gen Y in the public sector, the intention to leave the organization has no relation with commitment.

The results also show a positive relation between affective commitment and turnover intention ($\beta=0.877$, $p<0.01$), which is unlike the results of other studies (Rai & Mukherjee, 2017; Wong & Wong, 2017) that show an inverse or negative relationship between these variables. This result is interesting as it indicates that for Gen Y in the public sector, the intention to leave the organization has no relation with commitment. In fact, many of the employees were not even aware of the organization, in which they are now employed, before joining it, and they joined only because their parents wanted them to work in a public sector organization. This fact came to light during the interviews, when 30% of the surveyed employees confirmed that they had not even heard of their organization before joining. This means that even if the public sector employees are not committed, they refrain from leaving the organization and opt to stay because of the benefits offered by the public sector, even if they are dissatisfied with certain aspects of the job (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017).

Gen Y aspire for jobs in the public sector because these are secure and at the same time more prestigious and authoritative in nature. This fact was also

confirmed during the interviews wherein 70% of the surveyed employees mentioned that they either wanted to join Civil Services of the Government of India or are still preparing for it. Comparable results were established by Ertas (2015) who opined that people who give importance to serving the public are probably exploring other job prospects to continue working in another government job.

Individuals with greater PSM values are more likely to work for the government due to the public service opportunities these careers provide.

According to Henstra and McGowan (2016), Gen Y are motivated both by perceived intrinsic benefits, such as the opportunity to make a difference in society, as well as extrinsic rewards, such as opportunities for career advancement, and identify the public service career as a 'calling', a vocation with a sense of obligation to contribute to the public interest. This concept has been called as public service motivation (PSM) and has been defined by Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) as an altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation or mankind. Hence, individuals with greater PSM values are more likely to work for the government due to the public service opportunities these careers provide (Ertas, 2015). Therefore, this could be a probable reason for the negative relationship between Work Values and Job Satisfaction ($\beta=-0.040$, ns) in the current study. However, findings of Ng et al. (2016) state

that PSM levels among Gen Y are lower relative to other career motivations, and their interest in government employment has to do more with extrinsic rewards and lifestyle preferences.

Another interesting finding which came to light during the interviews was that 75% of employees were not satisfied with the way their organization was being managed. However, they are still continuing to work there because their work values of good remuneration and job security are being met eminently. This factor can also be attributed to negative relationship between Work Values and Job Satisfaction.

Furthermore, results of this study indicate a positive relationship between affective commitment and job satisfaction ($\beta=0.861$, $p<0.01$), which is in-line with the results of research by Steijn (2008), which established that PSM fit is associated with both greater job satisfaction and a greater inclination to stay on in the present job. Therefore, employees with a better PSM fit are more satisfied and less inclined to leave their jobs, and, the organizations they work for rather than those employees without such a fit (Steijn, 2008). Moreover, by being employed in a public sector, especially in the insurance industry, people get a better chance to touch other people's lives, which gives them more thrill and greater job satisfaction.

The results of the study also show a positive relationship between affective commitment and felt obligation ($\beta=0.445$, $p<0.01$). The plausible reason could be

that since public sector jobs offer a safe, secure, stable and lucrative career to the employees (Niedosik, 2014; Markovits et al., 2007), they get attracted towards these jobs irrespective of their interest which encourages them to remain committed to the organization and have a sense of obligation to repay the organization for the opportunities and support provided to them.

Practical Implications

Understanding and addressing the dynamics of Gen Y in public sector is very crucial as public sector insurance companies are constantly facing tough competition from their counterparts in the private sector. In order to maintain the competitive edge, organizations should strive to improve the workplace characteristics that are more valued by employees, and develop employee-friendly HRM policies and practices to manage an increasingly 'mobile' workforce (Ertas, 2015). Managing the aspirations of Gen Y could be challenging as they expect faster career progression and scope for self-development opportunities. Hence initiating regular discussions with seniors, handholding for developing crucial managerial skills, giving scope for talent mobility, and facilitating networking opportunities would help develop Gen Y along with harnessing their latent potential for

Managing the aspirations of Gen Y could be challenging as they expect faster career progression and scope for self-development opportunities.

organizational growth (Chawla et al., 2017).

For public sector organizations in India, the challenge is much more crucial as majority of their management processes and HRM policies are pre-defined and set by governmental stipulations and regulations. Therefore, it is critical for public sector organizations to analyze how the nature of work and workplace itself can be adapted to foster commitment among Gen Y workforce, and how these organizations can initiate differentiating practices (within their limitations) to ensure higher level of retention amongst Gen Y. The Indian public sector non-life insurance companies, hence need to explore discerned policies and understand how these can be adopted and adapted within their HRM guidelines and practices in order to achieve their long-term organizational objectives, and at the same time aligning them with those of the Gen Y employees.

Limitations & Suggestions

Like any other research, this study too has several limitations. Respondents were selected only from the Indian public sector non-life insurance organizations and do not include respondents from the private life insurance sector of the insurance industry, or from any other sector. Hence the results are not necessarily representative of the various groups of employees working in different sectors. Therefore, including samples from different sectors would help facilitate a more comprehensive study of the variables. Finally, the sample size of this study was

limited to responses from 188 respondents. Further research could include a larger sample size which would help in a broader analysis. This research has also presented PSM, though it was not a variable under the study. Therefore, PSM may be further explored in future research to understand how this may or may not have a direct or indirect impact on work attitudes. However, despite the limitations, this study makes a contribution to the literature in terms of Gen Y working in the public sector in India.

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