APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING MID-CAREER CRISIS OF WORKING WOMEN

Gurpreet kaur[*]

Abstract

This paper tends to explore the existing literature to understand and interpret diverse approaches concerning mid career working women. Mid career stage is characterised by the web of social influences having multiple impacts on the career aspirations of working women. These middle years of women's career largely determine their changes in career, exit or progression of career across women workforce. It is still unclear why some women fail to realise their career aspirations while others make to the top of it. Thus the present review based study envisages around various approaches to career aspirations of women which would help understand the implications of midlife crisis across women's career.

Keywords:

Mid Career,

Career Aspirations,

Working women,

Women's career

[*] **Assistant Prof in Commerce, Bebe Nanaki University College, Mithra (Kapurthala)**

Introduction

The phenomenon of "midlife crisis" across women's careers is a novel observation (BARBARA, 1980). The mid-life crisis is widely believed to be an outcome of social influences on the women's career across time and space. This phenomenon has occasionally been defined as those middle years in the women's lives span that range from the thirties to forties (BARBARA, 1980). This study assumes the definition for the mid-career working women as those that belong to this exclusive range vis-a-vis the age factor and the experience accumulated henceforth. Such a mid-life crisis is largely been studied as having multiple consequences for the career change, exit or progression across the women work force worldwide (KHAN, Talib, 2014).

Hall's model on the mid-career crisis illustrates the significance of the changes in learning orientation across the career progression. A research study across the mid-career primary school teachers (LUSTY, 2016) devised the crucial role of the stages and plateaus with regard to opportunity identification and support marshaling across the phases of life. Another research across the professional women's mid-career satisfaction (AUSTER, 2001)regarded the phenomenon as comprising the individual characteristics, career characteristics, organizational characteristics and specific success factors as having a definite impact on the women's mid-career satisfaction across the American economy.

## Social Chronology theorizing of women's careers

In a study(MAYRHOFER, Meyer,Steyrer, 2007) on the exploration of the diverse contexts in an onion–skin model, four levels were identified as work, the origin of the respective individual (women in this case), the society and the surrounding culture as impacting the conceptualization and contextualization of careers across the working women. The "social chronology theorizing" approach combines three distinct perspectives of conditionary, boundative and the temporal aspects of career determination(GUNZ, Mayrhoferr, 2015). The conditionary perspective pertains to the knowledge regarding the career actor (working women in this case) at a point of time. The boundative aspects of one's career focus on the specific and situational structuring of the contextual constraints, enablers and punctuators (boundaries that enable or limit one's career expression). The temporal aspects have been interpreted as ones related with time across which the careers are been operationalized or played out in social contexts.

GUNZ, Mayrhoferr (2015) further hypothesized the careers as those distinct patterns that are conditioned over time and that confine themselves to a bounded social space (work place in particular). In easier terms, career across the working women could be understood as involving the social space within which an individual's (working women in this case) career could be mapped and analyzed. The careers are regarded as dynamic and temporal in nature as the situations, the age and the requirements of the employer change over the periods of time.GUNZ, Mayrhoferr (2015) interprets the career as an outcome of three perspectives- condition, boundary and the time. These three constructs have been observed to impact the dynamics and the utility of the working women's career in particular. The literature review extensively points towards the embedment of women's careers across the social contexts, yet the definition and interpretation of the internal and external contexts and women's perceived and observed social contexts(LAWERENCE, 2010) is still unclear. MAYRHOFER, Meyer, Steyrer, (2007) observed the women's career as an outcome of diverse contexts that determine the dynamics and progression of career cycles.The diverse contexts as highlighted in above illustration are the individual contexts (women herself), context of work (employing organization), context of women's origins (social and gendered), contexts of society and the global contexts of women's employment and job satisfaction. The research interprets the individual contexts as involving the individual's own accumulated repository of skills and expertise with relation to current vocation, women's own inherent or developed inclination for work and career development, women's own cognitive strengths and the women's signaling intensity as part of her professional vitality at work place.

The work contexts (organizational contexts) have been interpreted as involving the working women's own perception of the existence of supports from across the organization, from across the supervisor, mentoring assistance as well as the vital support for work from the surrounding family. The working women's perception of support for her professional development has been espoused as a vital determinant of her consistent ability to sustain and leverage her competencies in the current work place.

The (external) societal contexts have been interpreted as involving the prevalence of the dominant gender based norms and mores that stereotype the thinking of society with regard to

adoption and perusal of a vocation, with regard to seeking job promotion and prevalent ideologies with regard to gender abilities to handle and manage a set of job responsibilities at work place.Another study highlighted the crucial role of needs, opportunities and values in shaping the contexts of the women's career cycles.SPIERINGS, Smits, Verloo, (2008) evaluated the contexts in view of the needs, opportunities and value based framework. The study interpreted the contexts as women(herself), household, organization and local contexts and the international contexts. As per the study, the most potent determinant of women's consistent employment is the individual herself. The study acknowledged the prominent role of the individual's self-determination and resource based competency in seeking an employment and retaining the tenure across the time.
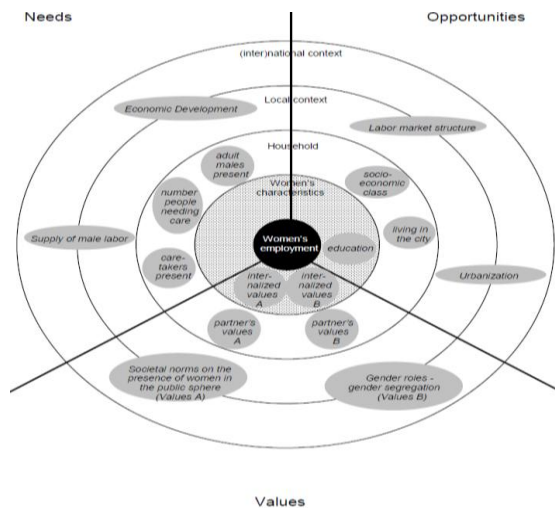
Source:(SPIERINGS, Smits,Verloo, 2008)

The other prominent context as identified was the "household" context. Across this context, the initial aspirations regarding the family responsibilities, care giving role based aspirations and the bread earning aspirations take shape. The life partner's value system and intentions to support the work related aspirations of the spouse are regarded as crucial for successful transition from home to work place.

The appropriate conceptualization of "contexts" in academic literature has remained dismal and non-convergent ever since the research on the women's career aspirations. In a study (FESSELLER, 1995) across the contextual influences on the mid-career teachers in Europe; it was concluded that the women's career cycle is dually impacted by the personal environment as well as the organizational environment.
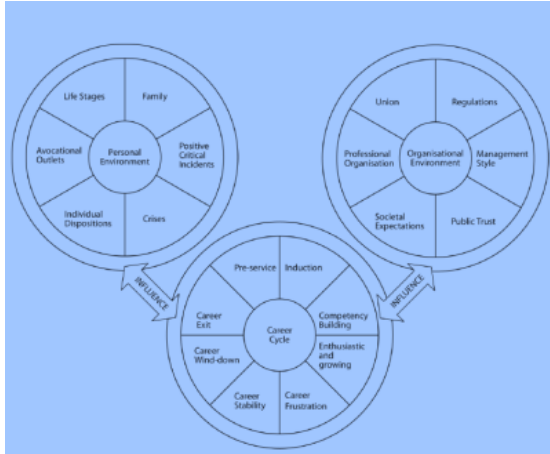
Source: (FESSELLER, 1995)

Fresseller's "contextual" framework espouses the trifocal role of the working women's personal environment and working women's organizational environment on the respective career cycle of the women in general. The study across the teachers indicated the prevalence of the dual impact of the women's personal environment and the organizational perspectives on the patterns and contents of the career cycles. The issue of skills obsolescence and career plateauing was also noticed as impacting the career patterns across the working women especially the primary school teachers. Another study on the antecedents and outcomes of women unfriendly experiences at work place(KAUPPINEN, Gruber, 1993) mentioned the prevalence of the impact of the job characteristics and the work climate in creating the favorable or the unfavorable work related experiences and contexts for the mid-career women in developing countries.

KAUPPINEN, Gruber (1993) explored the predictors and outcomes of male harassment and hostility toward woman(woman unfriendly experiences) across the 805 blue collar women workforce and reported the significant impact of contexts on differences across the regions. Another study(BARBARA, 1980) underlined the crucial role of the immediate contexts, relational contexts and the cultural contexts on the individual's career patterns in medium to long term perspective. The research regarded the "relational context" as comprising the support from spouse and family and other responsibilities with regard to family and children rearing. The "cultural contexts" were regarded as comprising the values, norms and the respective gender roles as embedded in social thinking across time. The research further regarded the "immediate contexts" as comprising the facilitation or acting as barriers to the overall career determination of women in gendered organizations worldwide.

BARBARA (1980) acknowledged the dominating role of trifocal contexts of the relational, immediate and cultural contexts on the working women's efficiency and vitality at work place.Another research on the rampant "contextual structures and agencies" in mid-life career change across the women workforce; considered the relative importance of the institution and the individual on the overall growth and trajectory of women's career progression.

Another study(GUNZ, Mayrhoferr, 2015) explored the women's careers as a focal point across the institutions, individual and the society at large yet remained inconclusive about the context and scope of relationships across the diverse actors. The study pointed towards the lack of consolidating framework that could facilitate mutual exchange of ideas across career studies and other fields of social research. The study insisted on the spatial, ontic and temporal perspectives in the career research to emphasize the key role of the impacts of previous stages on the subsequent stages of career transition or even exit.

The research on contextual barriers(SUJATHA, 2008) has always remained incomplete and environment driven. A study across 440 men and women in six main cities of India followed the exploratory and analytical research design to decipher the linkages across the work-family pressures, structural barriers and the managerial stereotypes, as the contexts that determine the career growth across the mid-career working women in India.

Transition phenomenon and women's careers

The conceptual background of the transition concept revolves around the Schlossberg's theory of transition across careers. The earlier studies on the "career transition" interpret the phenomenon as an outcome of the events that result in a prospective change in overall relationships, routines and assumptions associated with the self-identity, work place, family roles or the overall balance of cross contextual role playing. Such transitions across the women have been observed as either anticipatory or un-anticipatory or non-eventual in nature and context.

The research studies have been focused on the exploration of the relationships across the life events and women's career across the longer periods of time.WILLIAMS (2008) examined the relationship between the women's sense of well-being and the women's life events across her

social progression in life. The study concluded that the incidence of high and lows with regard to women's sense of mental and physical wellbeing are evident across her social transformation in social contexts. Such transitions were observed to impact her working life or the occupational satisfaction in longer time frame perspective.
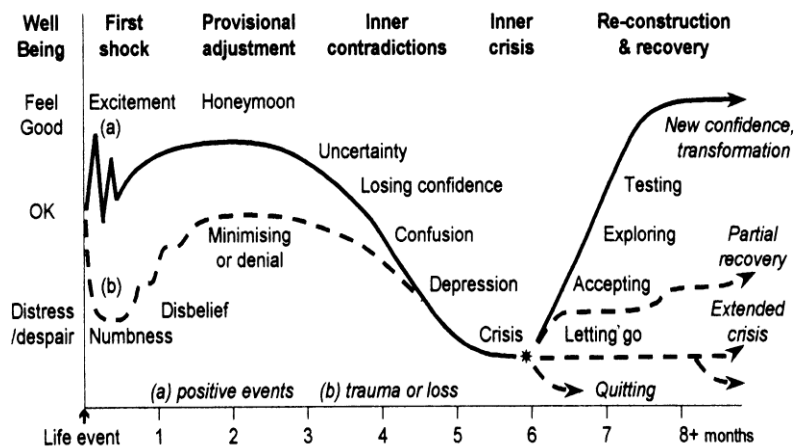

Source: http://www.eoslifework.co.uk/Images/fut1.gif (WILLIAMS, 2008)

Locus of Control as approach towards understanding women careers

The working women's "locus of control ideology" stresses the key role of the reinforcements that are either internal or external in nature.The prevalence of internal or the external locus of control of the decision making and implementation has been observed to impact the career across the women in particular. The existing studies on this aspect of women's career determination have rather been non convergent and fragmented in scope and context.The reinforcement phenomenon across the women(ROTTER, 1966) has been observed either as the internally controlled or externally driven. The women with internal locus of control perceive the career events as resulting from their own behavior patterns and the internal competencies(APRIL, Dharani,Peters, n.d.). On the other hand the external locus (evident across a majority of working women) of control stresses the dominant impact of external controls and contexts on the working women's job related behavior, career progression efforts and the overall approach towards the attainment of career related satisfaction or dissatisfaction across the middle age.
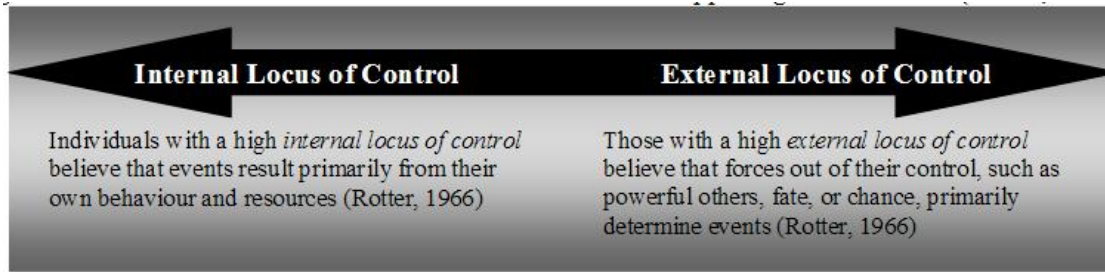
Source: (APRIL, Dharani,Peters, n.d.)
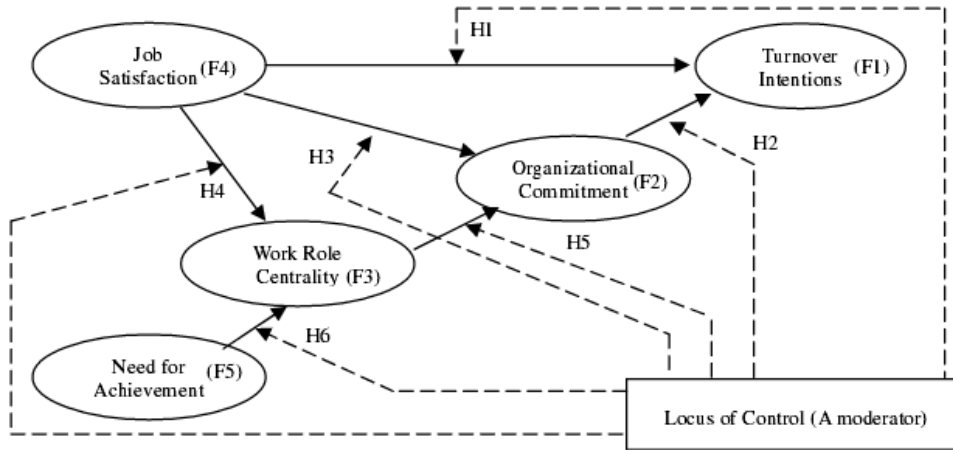
Source: (LIN, Ding, 2005)

LIN, Ding, (2005) observed the incidence of the multiple relations across the constructs of job satisfaction, women's need for achievement, women employee's work role centrality, working women's organizational commitment, turnover intentions and the respective locus of control of the working women across her career progression. The study observed the moderating role of the women's respective "locus of control" in the linkages across the women's sense of job related satisfaction and the respective commitment across the organizational perspective.

Bibliography

1.   BARBARA. 1980. The myth of the Midlife Crisis. *Sloan management Review*. **21**(4).

2.   BARBERA. 2013. *A qualitative examination of career resillency in professional immigrants*.

3.   FERGUSON, Carlson. 2015. The supportive Spouse at Work: Does being work linked help? *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*.

4.   FESSELLER. 1995. The dynamics of teacher career stages. *In*: GUSKEY, (ed). *Professional Development in education*, Teachers college Press.

5.   GUNZ, Mayrhoferr. 2015. The Social Chronology Framework: A multiperspective approach to career studies.

6.   HACKETT. 1995. *Self Efficacy in Career choice and Development*.

7.   UAN, Wang,Dong. 2012. Career locus of control and career success among the Chinese Employees. *Journal of Career Assessment*. **21**(2).

8.   HUFFMAN, Casper,Payne. 2013. How does spouse career support relate to employee turnover? *Journal of Organizational Behavior*.

9.   ISHIGURO. n.d. Creating an analytical framework for Women's career development.

10.   ISMAIL, Adnan,Bakar. 2014. Percieved Organizational career development dupport in workplace career program. *Economic Annals*. **201**(April).

11.   KAUPPINEN, Gruber. 1993. Antecedents and Outcomes of woman-unfriendly experiences. *Psychology of Woman Quarterly*. **17**.

12.   KHAN, Talib. 2014. Modelling the constructs of Midlife career stress. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research: A Administration and Management*. **14**(7).

13.   ENT, Brown,Hackett. 1994. Towards a unifying Social cognitive theory of career and academic interest. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. **45**.

14.   LENT, Hackett. 2000. Contextual Supports and Barriers to Career Choices. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*. **47**(1).

15.   LEVY. 2011. Knowledge Retention: Minimizing the organizational business loss. *Journal of Knowledge Management*. **15**(4).

16.   LIN, Ding. 2005. Moderating effect of the locus of control on the process of turnover intentions for high-tech personnels. *Asia Pacific Management Review*. **10**(5).

17.   MAYRHOFER, Meyer,Steyrer. 2007. Contextul issues in study of careers. *In*: GUNZZ, (ed). *Handbook of career studies*.

18.   MAYRHOFER, Tolbert. 2011. Introduction to speacial section: Careers in context.

19.   OTTER. 1966. Generalised expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs*. **80**(1).

20.   RUSTAGI. 2010. Employment trends for women in India. *ILO Asia-Pacific Working Paper Series*.

21.   SCHANER, Das. 2016. Female labor force participation in Asia: Indonesia Country Study.

22.   SPIERINGS, Smits,Verloo. 2008. Micro and Macro level dterminants of women's employment in six MENA countires. *NICE Working Paper 08-104*.

23.   UJATHA. 2008. Barriers to career growth in women managers: An Indian Scenario. *Asia Pacific Business Review*. **4**(3).

24.   SCHNEER, Reitman. 1995. The impact of gender as managerial career unfold. *Journal of vocational behavior*. **47**, pp.291-313.

25.   SEALY, Singh. 2010. The importance of role models and demographic contexts for senior women's work identity development. *International Journal of Management Reviews*. **12**(3).

26.   SEHGAL. 2007. Women in Police: A study of their career aspirations and motivations. *Indian journal of Industrial relations*. **42**(3).

27.   SEIBERT, Kraimer,Liden. 2001. A social capital theory of career success. *The academy of managment journal*. **44**(2).

28.   SUN, Zheng. 2014. Proactive personality and Career Success: A person-organization fit. *EMTC*.

29.   WEISS, Freund,Weise. 2012. Mastering Developmental transitions in young and middle adulthood: The interplay of openness to experience and traditional geneder idealogy on Women's self-efficacy and subjective well being. *Developmental Psychology*. **48**(6), pp.1776-79.

30.   WILLIAMS. 2008. *Life events and career change: Transition psychology in practice*. [online]. [Accessed 16 February 2017]. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.eoslifework.co.uk/transprac.htm>