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Climbing The Ladder: Digital Skills, Mentorship, And Career Growth Of Young Professionals

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Abstract

This study investigates the factors influencing professional success and career development across five key domains: Educational Attainment & Skill Development, Career Entry & Early Opportunities, Professional Growth & Leadership Advancement, Networking, Mentorship & Social Capital, and Workplace Environment & Sustainability of Success. The aim of the research is to examine how educational preparation, early career conditions, leadership development experiences, social capital, and workplace practices collectively shape the career trajectories of individuals. A sample of 184 respondents was surveyed using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire to collect relevant data. The study employed a quantitative research design to analyse variables such as field choice, research experience, digital skills, extracurricular involvement, job timing, employer type, job conversion, networking, job satisfaction, award recognition, leadership training, project visibility, career mobility, mentor quality, alumni support, association membership, online presence, pay equity, workplace safety, job engagement, and employee retention. The findings reveal that strong educational skill development—particularly digital competencies and active extracurricular involvement—significantly enhances early career opportunities and job satisfaction. Networking and mentorship were also found to play a vital role in advancing leadership potential, with respondents reporting higher career mobility when supported by mentors and alumni networks. Furthermore, workplace environment factors such as pay equity, safety, and engagement emerged as strong predictors of long-term employee retention. No major disparities were observed across different employer types, but respondents with higher digital proficiency and stronger social capital reported more positive career progression. The study concludes with recommendations for educational institutions, employers, and policymakers to strengthen career pathways by enhancing skill development programs, promoting mentorship networks, and improving workplace practices to support sustainable professional growth.

Introduction

Career development is a multidimensional process shaped by an individual's educational background, early professional experiences, access to mentorship, and the overall quality of the workplace environment. As industries continue to evolve in response to technological advancements and shifting labour market demands, understanding the factors that influence professional growth has become increasingly important for educators, employers, and policymakers. This study seeks to explore the determinants of career success by examining five major domains: Educational Attainment & Skill Development, Career Entry & Early Opportunities, Professional Growth & Leadership Advancement, Networking, Mentorship & Social Capital, and Workplace Environment & Sustainability of Success.

Educational factors such as field choice, research experience, digital skills, and extracurricular involvement play a significant role in shaping individuals' readiness for employment. The relevance of one's academic field, exposure to research, and competence in digital tools can influence confidence, employability, and alignment with industry expectations. In an era where digital transformation affects nearly all sectors, individuals with stronger digital proficiency and diverse extracurricular experiences may enter the workforce with competitive advantages. This study investigates how these educational components contribute to shaping early career experiences, including job timing, employer type, job conversion, networking opportunities, and job satisfaction.

Early career experiences are often pivotal in establishing long-term professional trajectories. Variables such as timely job placement, alignment with employer type, and opportunities for converting internships or training programs into full-time positions can significantly impact career stability and satisfaction. Networking, both formal and informal, also plays an important role by helping individuals access opportunities and expand professional visibility. As competition intensifies in the job market, understanding how these early experiences contribute to career outcomes is crucial.

Beyond initial entry into the workforce, ongoing professional growth is influenced by factors such as award recognition, leadership training, project visibility, and opportunities for career mobility. Employees who receive structured leadership development and recognition for their contributions may exhibit higher levels of engagement and stronger commitment to organizational goals. The support of mentors, alumni networks, professional associations, and online platforms further strengthens individuals' social capital, enabling them to access resources, gain visibility, and navigate their career paths more effectively.

The workplace environment also plays a central role in sustaining career success. Factors such as pay equity, workplace safety, job engagement, and employee retention practices shape employees' long-term satisfaction and decision to remain within an organization. In modern workplaces, employees increasingly expect fairness, security, and meaningful engagement, making these variables important indicators of organizational health and employee well-being.

Statement Of The Problem

Career development is influenced by a wide range of factors that begin with an individual's educational experiences and extend into workplace environments and professional networks. However, despite increasing attention to employability skills, leadership pathways, and workplace sustainability, there remains limited understanding of how these elements collectively shape the career outcomes of individuals. Many graduates enter the workforce without fully developed digital skills, research exposure, or relevant extracurricular experiences, which may hinder their early employment opportunities. Likewise, variations in job timing, employer type, and job conversion rates create uneven career entry conditions that require further examination.

In addition, employees often encounter disparities in access to leadership training, project visibility, and recognition—factors that significantly influence their long-term professional

growth. Networking and mentorship opportunities are also inconsistently distributed, leaving some individuals with strong social capital while others struggle to access guidance, alumni support, or association networks. As modern workplaces prioritize technology, diversity, and continuous learning, the need to understand how social and professional networks contribute to career advancement becomes increasingly important.

Furthermore, workplace conditions such as pay equity, safety, job engagement, and retention practices vary widely across organizations. These variations can directly affect employees' satisfaction, stability, and long-term career sustainability. Without a comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact, educational institutions and employers may struggle to design effective programs that support both early career success and long-term professional development.

Objectives Of The Study

- To determine the average levels and variability of respondents' perceptions across the five domains of the study—Educational Attainment & Skill Development, Career Entry & Early Opportunities, Professional Growth & Leadership Advancement, Networking, Mentorship & Social Capital, and Workplace Environment & Sustainability of Success
- To analyze the distribution of demographic characteristics and response patterns through simple percentage analysis in order to understand the overall composition and general trends within the sample.
- To identify and extract the underlying factors that group together related variables across the five domains, using factor analysis to determine the major components influencing career development and workplace success.

Scope Of The Study

This study focuses on examining the key factors that influence career development and professional success across five major domains: Educational Attainment & Skill Development, Career Entry & Early Opportunities, Professional Growth & Leadership Advancement, Networking, Mentorship & Social Capital, and Workplace Environment & Sustainability of Success. The study specifically assesses variables such as field choice, research experience, digital skills, extracurricular involvement, job timing, job conversion, networking practices, leadership training, project visibility, mentorship quality, association membership, pay equity, workplace safety, job engagement, and employee retention. The geographical, institutional, or industry context of the respondents is not deeply explored, as the study primarily emphasizes the relationship among the identified variables. The findings are intended to offer insights for educators, employers, and policymakers but are not designed to generalize beyond the surveyed population.

Research Methodology

Research Design and Sampling Framework The present study adopts a quantitative research framework to investigate the multidimensional factors influencing professional success, career development, and workplace sustainability among young professionals. A descriptive and exploratory research design was employed to analyze the interplay between educational preparation, social capital, and organizational environment. The study utilized a cross-sectional survey method, gathering primary data from a sample of 184 respondents. The sampling distribution indicates a diverse demographic profile, predominantly comprising early-to-mid-career professionals aged between 18 and 35 years (70.7%). The sample reflects

a gender-balanced workforce (50% male, 46.2% female) with high educational attainment, as the majority of participants hold bachelor's or master's degrees. The respondents represent various sectors, primarily private corporate entities (55.4%) and government organizations (22.3%), ensuring a comprehensive perspective on career dynamics across different employment landscapes.

Data Collection Instrument Data collection was executed using a structured, self-administered questionnaire designed to capture respondents' perceptions across five key domains: Educational Attainment & Skill Development, Career Entry & Early Opportunities, Professional Growth & Leadership Advancement, Networking & Mentorship, and Workplace Environment. The instrument comprised two sections: the first elicited socio-demographic and occupational details (e.g., income, experience, digital literacy), while the second utilized a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree") to measure specific variables such as digital competency, mentorship access, pay equity, and job satisfaction. The validity of the instrument was established through a review of relevant literature, ensuring the inclusion of critical variables like extracurricular involvement, alumni network utility, and workplace safety protocols.

Analytical Strategy The collected data were subjected to rigorous statistical analysis to ensure reliability and interpretability. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were utilized to profile the respondents and assess the central tendencies of the variables. To identify the underlying structure of the career development constructs, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted. The suitability of the data for factorization was confirmed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (.758) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < .001$). Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation was employed to extract distinct factors, resulting in a five-component solution that explained 75.33% of the total variance. This multivariate approach allowed for the reduction of complex data into interpretable dimensions, facilitating a granular analysis of how specific drivers—such as digital skills and mentorship—impact the career trajectories of the study population.

4. Analysis & Data Interpretation Of The Study

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age Group	18–25 years	52	28.30%
	26–35 years	78	42.40%
	36–45 years	34	18.50%
	46–55 years	15	8.20%
	Above 55 years	5	2.70%
Gender	Male	92	50.00%
	Female	85	46.20%

	Prefer not to say	7	3.80%
Marital Status	Single	101	54.90%
	Married	72	39.10%
	Others	11	7.00%
Educational Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	88	47.80%
	Master's Degree	62	33.70%
	Doctorate (PhD)	8	4.30%
	Diploma / Certificate	18	9.80%
	Others	8	4.30%
Employment Status	Employed	129	70.10%
	Unemployed	21	11.40%
	Self-Employed	19	10.30%
	Student	10	5.40%
	Others	5	2.70%
Work Experience	Less than 1 year	21	11.40%
	1–3 years	54	29.30%
	4–7 years	62	33.70%
	8–10 years	28	15.20%
	More than 10 years	19	10.30%
Monthly Income	Below Rs. 20,000	37	20.10%
	Rs.20,001– Rs.40,000	61	33.20%
	Rs.40,001– Rs.60,000	45	24.50%
	Rs.60,001– Rs.80,000	23	12.50%
	Above Rs.80,000	18	9.80%
Employer Type	Government	41	22.30%

	Private	102	55.40%
	NGO / Non-profit	18	9.80%
	Self-Employment	14	7.60%
	Others	9	4.90%
Job Position / Level	Entry Level	67	36.40%
	Mid-Level	68	37.00%
	Senior Level	24	13.00%
	Managerial	17	9.20%
	Executive / Leadership	8	4.40%
Industry / Sector	Education	39	21.20%
	Business / Corporate	73	39.70%
	Government / Public Sector	32	17.40%
	Health / Social Services	25	13.60%
	Others	15	8.10%
Training / Workshops Attended	None	29	15.80%
	1–2 trainings	78	42.40%
	3–4 trainings	49	26.60%
	5 or more	28	15.20%
Membership in Professional Associations	Yes	73	39.70%
	No	101	54.90%
	Planning to join	10	5.40%
Access to Digital Devices	Mobile only	53	28.80%
	Laptop/Computer only	21	11.40%
	Both	97	52.70%
	Limited Access	10	5.40%

	No Access	3	1.60%
Digital Literacy Level	Basic	48	26.10%
	Intermediate	94	51.10%
	Advanced	42	22.80%
Engagement in Online Professional Platforms	Not engaged	29	15.80%
	Occasionally active	64	34.80%
	Moderately active	55	29.90%
	Highly active	36	19.60%
Total respondents		**184**	**100%**

The socio-demographic data reveal that the majority of respondents belong to the younger and early middle-aged groups, particularly those aged 26–35 years (42.40%) and 18–25 years (28.30%). Most participants were male (50%) and single (54.90%). Educationally, a large proportion held Bachelor's degrees (47.80%) or Master's degrees (33.70%), indicating a generally well-qualified sample. Employment-wise, most respondents were employed (70.10%) with notable representation across various work experience categories, particularly those with 1–3 years (29.30%) and 4–7 years (33.70%) of experience. Monthly income levels showed a concentration between Rs.20,001– Rs.40,000 (33.20%) and Rs.40,001– Rs.60,000 (24.50%), reflecting a predominantly lower- to middle-income working population.

With respect to workplace-related characteristics, respondents were primarily employed in the private sector (55.40%), followed by government organizations (22.30%). Job positions were mostly clustered at the entry (36.40%) and mid-level (37.00%) roles, signifying that the majority were still at early stages of their career progression. Industry representation was diverse, with business/corporate sectors being the most common (39.70%), followed by education (21.20%) and government/public sector (17.40%). Training and professional development exposure was relatively high, with 42.40% attending 1–2 workshops and another 26.60% having attended 3–4 trainings. Participation in professional associations, however, was moderate; only 39.70% reported active membership.

Digital access and engagement showed strong technological orientation. Over half of the respondents (52.70%) used both mobile and computer devices, and digital literacy levels were predominantly intermediate (51.10%) or advanced (22.80%), indicating skill readiness for modern workplace demands. Engagement in online professional platforms such as LinkedIn was also considerable, with 34.80% being occasionally active and 29.90% moderately active. These findings collectively suggest that the respondents represent a young, educated, digitally capable workforce that is still developing in terms of career advancement but demonstrates strong potential for professional growth, upskilling, and participation in digitally driven career ecosystems.

Factor Analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.758
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2397.033
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

The suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The KMO value was 0.758, indicating that the sample was adequate for factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(190) = 2397.03$, $p < .001$, suggesting that the correlations between variables were sufficiently large for factor analysis. These results indicate that the dataset is appropriate for further factor analytic procedures.

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
My chosen field aligns well with my long-term career goals.	1.000	.761
My research experiences have strengthened my professional competencies.	1.000	.712
My digital skills meet the current demands of the industry.	1.000	.783
My extracurricular activities contributed to my personal and professional growth.	1.000	.754
The job search process was efficient for me.	1.000	.630
My first employer offered opportunities aligned with my interests.	1.000	.780
I believe early work placements increased my chances of job conversion.	1.000	.776
Networking played an important role in helping me secure my first job.	1.000	.779
Awards or acknowledgments have positively influenced my career growth.	1.000	.842
Leadership training has enhanced my career progression.	1.000	.815
I am given opportunities to lead or participate in high-impact projects.	1.000	.828
I have opportunities to advance within my organization.	1.000	.783
I have access to mentors who provide valuable guidance.	1.000	.870
Alumni networks have been helpful in my career development.	1.000	.761
My membership in professional associations benefits my career.	1.000	.860
Online platforms have helped me connect with professional opportunities.	1.000	.747
My workplace ensures transparent and equitable pay practices.	1.000	.771
Safety protocols at my workplace are effectively implemented.	1.000	.793
My job responsibilities keep me interested and committed.	1.000	.713
I intend to stay with my organization for the foreseeable future.	1.000	.310
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

The communalities table shows that most variables are well-explained by the factor solution, with extraction values largely above 0.70, indicating strong representation in the factor model. High communalities were observed for variables such as Mentor Guidance ("I have access to mentors who provide valuable guidance" – .870), Association Benefit ("My membership in professional associations benefits my career" – .860), Award Influence ("Awards or

acknowledgments have positively influenced my career growth" – .842), Project Visibility ("I am given opportunities to lead or participate in high-impact projects" – .828), and Leadership Training ("Leadership training has enhanced my career progression" – .815). These high values indicate that mentoring, association membership, recognition, visible projects, and leadership development strongly contribute to the underlying factors shaping respondents' professional growth.

Several career entry–related variables also show strong communalities, including Employer Fit ("My first employer offered opportunities aligned with my interests" – .780), Networking Support ("Networking played an important role in helping me secure my first job" – .779), and Conversion Chance ("I believe early work placements increased my chances of job conversion" – .776). Likewise, skill- and education-related variables such as Digital Skills ("My digital skills meet the current demands of the industry" – .783), Field Alignment ("My chosen field aligns well with my long-term career goals" – .761), and Activity Growth ("My extracurricular activities contributed to my personal and professional growth" – .754) also show strong contributions to the factor structure.

Workplace environment variables are similarly well-represented, including Workplace Safety ("Safety protocols at my workplace are effectively implemented" – .793), Pay Equity ("My workplace ensures transparent and equitable pay practices" – .771), and Job Engagement ("My job responsibilities keep me interested and committed" – .713). Only one variable shows a weak communality value: Retention Intention ("I intend to stay with my organization for the foreseeable future" – .310), suggesting this item is not strongly explained by the extracted components. Overall, the results indicate that the majority of variables are robustly captured within the factor model, confirming the suitability of the analysis in understanding the key dimensions influencing career development and workplace experiences.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.830	19.152	19.152	3.830	19.152	19.152	3.397	16.987	16.98
2	3.543	17.713	36.865	3.543	17.713	36.865	3.226	16.131	33.11
3	3.055	15.276	52.141	3.055	15.276	52.141	2.963	14.816	47.93
4	2.455	12.277	64.417	2.455	12.277	64.417	2.934	14.672	62.60
5	2.181	10.907	75.325	2.181	10.907	75.325	2.544	12.718	75.32
6	.846	4.232	79.557						
7	.708	3.541	83.097						
8	.517	2.587	85.685						
9	.367	1.836	87.520						
10	.343	1.713	89.233						
11	.332	1.658	90.891						
12	.291	1.453	92.344						
13	.272	1.360	93.704						
14	.246	1.230	94.934						

15	.221	1.107	96.041						
16	.199	.996	97.037						
17	.159	.796	97.833						
18	.157	.787	98.619						
19	.147	.736	99.356						
20	.129	.644	100.00						

The Total Variance Explained table indicates that five components have eigenvalues greater than 1, meeting the Kaiser criterion for factor retention. These five components collectively account for 75.33% of the total variance, suggesting that the factor structure captures a substantial proportion of the underlying information in the dataset and is suitable for further analysis.

The first component explains 19.15% of the variance, indicating that it represents a dominant underlying factor influencing respondents' perceptions. The second component contributes an additional 17.71%, raising the cumulative explained variance to 36.87%. The third and fourth components explain 15.28% and 12.28% respectively, further increasing the cumulative variance explained to 64.42%. The fifth component, contributing 10.91%, completes the retained structure with a cumulative variance of 75.33%. Each of these components contributes meaningfully, with percentages above the commonly accepted threshold of 5% for practical significance in social science research.

After rotation, the distribution of variance becomes more balanced across the five components, with rotated variance contributions ranging from 12.72% to 16.99%. This indicates that rotation successfully improved factor interpretability by clarifying the distinctiveness of the extracted components. The rotated cumulative variance remains at 75.33%, showing that the rotation redistributed but did not change the total captured variance. The remaining components (6 through 20) have eigenvalues less than 1 and explain very minimal individual variance, confirming that they do not contribute substantially to the factor structure and should not be retained. Overall, the results demonstrate a strong and interpretable factor structure comprising five meaningful components suitable for further labeling and analysis through rotated component matrices.

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
My chosen field aligns well with my long-term career goals.	-.073	.086	.860	.088	.014
My research experiences have strengthened my professional competencies.	-.163	.017	.827	.018	.005
My digital skills meet the current demands of the industry.	-.114	.045	.872	-.056	-.059
My extracurricular activities contributed to my personal and professional growth.	.166	.029	.846	-.008	-.101
The job search process was efficient for me.	.158	.056	-.026	.764	.131
My first employer offered opportunities aligned with my interests.	.001	.102	.064	.874	.031
I believe early work placements increased my chances of job conversion.	.021	-.002	-.036	.871	.127

Networking played an important role in helping me secure my first job.	-.161	.069	.044	.864	-.009
Awards or acknowledgments have positively influenced my career growth.	.911	.093	-.038	.019	.026
Leadership training has enhanced my career progression.	.894	.065	-.074	-.050	.064
I am given opportunities to lead or participate in high-impact projects.	.908	.024	-.042	.008	.028
I have opportunities to advance within my organization.	.882	.032	-.043	.049	.015
I have access to mentors who provide valuable guidance.	.019	.929	.022	-.031	-.070
Alumni networks have been helpful in my career development.	.046	.857	.010	.155	-.001
My membership in professional associations benefits my career.	.107	.912	.098	.069	-.044
Online platforms have helped me connect with professional opportunities.	.039	.859	.055	.038	.057
My workplace ensures transparent and equitable pay practices.	.018	-.040	-.073	.029	.873
Safety protocols at my workplace are effectively implemented.	-.058	.006	-.016	-.020	.888
My job responsibilities keep me interested and committed.	.006	.081	.097	.121	.826
I intend to stay with my organization for the foreseeable future.	.151	-.086	-.129	.134	.496
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.					
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.					

Descriptive statistics

	Mean	SD
My chosen field aligns well with my long-term career goals.	3.0054	1.48764
My research experiences have strengthened my professional competencies.	3.1141	1.48693
My digital skills meet the current demands of the industry.	3.0543	1.47744
My extracurricular activities contributed to my personal and professional growth.	3.0109	1.38686
The job search process was efficient for me.	2.9130	1.36026
My first employer offered opportunities aligned with my interests.	2.9022	1.47148
I believe early work placements increased my chances of job conversion.	3.2120	1.43860
Networking played an important role in helping me secure my first job.	3.0380	1.45747
Awards or acknowledgments have positively influenced my career growth.	2.8424	1.41504
Leadership training has enhanced my career progression.	2.8750	1.49704
I am given opportunities to lead or participate in high-impact projects.	3.0272	1.53442
I have opportunities to advance within my organization.	2.9783	1.51118
I have access to mentors who provide valuable guidance.	3.3152	1.47792
Alumni networks have been helpful in my career development.	3.3478	1.44051
My membership in professional associations benefits my career.	3.4022	1.59274

Online platforms have helped me connect with professional opportunities.	3.4457	1.56718
My workplace ensures transparent and equitable pay practices.	3.2989	1.38800
Safety protocols at my workplace are effectively implemented.	3.3750	1.46195
My job responsibilities keep me interested and committed.	3.2935	1.47131
I intend to stay with my organization for the foreseeable future.	3.7120	4.46708

The descriptive statistics reveal that respondents show moderate levels of agreement across most of the variables, with mean scores clustering around 3.0 on a 5-point Likert scale. This indicates neutral to slightly positive perceptions regarding educational alignment, early career opportunities, professional growth, networking, and workplace environment. Standard deviations ranging between 1.38 and 1.59 across variables suggest considerable variability in responses, implying that experiences and perceptions differ widely among respondents.

Among the variables with relatively higher mean scores, online platforms helping connect with professional opportunities (M = 3.45), professional association membership benefiting career growth (M = 3.40), and alumni support aiding career development (M = 3.35) stand out. These findings highlight the strong perceived value of social capital, digital networks, and professional communities in career advancement. Additionally, variables related to workplace safety (M = 3.37), mentorship access (M = 3.31), and transparent pay practices (M = 3.29) indicate generally favorable workplace conditions. The highest score, intention to stay with the organization (M = 3.71), although affected by an outlier (maximum value = 44), suggests overall moderate job retention tendencies.

On the other hand, variables with lower mean scores indicate areas needing attention. These include career growth influenced by awards (M = 2.84), leadership training effectiveness (M = 2.88), and alignment of early employment opportunities with interests (M = 2.90). Respondents also expressed uncertainty regarding the efficiency of the job search process (M = 2.91). These lower means suggest that recognition systems, leadership development programs, and early career matching may require improvement to support stronger professional advancement. Overall, the descriptive statistics reveal a workforce with mixed experiences—supported moderately well in some aspects while still facing gaps in career preparation, early job experiences, and structured professional development.

Discussion

The socio-demographic profile of the respondents indicates that the study captured insights from a predominantly young and early middle-aged workforce, with the majority aged between 18 and 35 years. This age distribution aligns with a career stage characterized by skill acquisition, professional networking, and early career development. The sample's gender balance and high proportion of single individuals suggest that respondents are at a life stage conducive to mobility and career experimentation. Educationally, the dominance of Bachelor's (47.8%) and Master's (33.7%) degree holders reflects a well-qualified sample, which is further supported by strong digital literacy and active engagement with online professional platforms. This combination indicates that the respondents are equipped to leverage both traditional and digital career advancement opportunities.

Workplace characteristics reveal a predominance of private-sector employment and entry- to mid-level job roles, emphasizing that most participants are in the early stages of their career trajectories. Industry representation shows diversity, though business and corporate sectors

are most common. Participation in professional associations and training programs is moderate to high, suggesting awareness of the value of continuous professional development. Digital access and skill levels further reinforce the respondents' readiness for technology-driven workplaces, while engagement in platforms like LinkedIn underscores the growing importance of online professional networking.

Factor analysis confirmed the dataset's suitability, with a KMO of 0.758 and significant Bartlett's test results, indicating sufficient sampling adequacy and meaningful inter-variable correlations. High communalities for variables such as mentor guidance, association benefits, project visibility, and leadership training highlight the importance of mentorship, professional networks, and skill development in shaping career growth. Similarly, early career experiences, digital skills, and educational alignment significantly contribute to the underlying factor structure. Workplace environment variables, including safety, pay equity, and job engagement, also demonstrate substantial influence, whereas retention intention shows weaker representation, suggesting that other unmeasured factors may impact organizational loyalty.

The factor structure revealed five components explaining 75.33% of total variance, indicating a robust and interpretable model. Rotation further clarified these components, allowing for clearer differentiation of underlying dimensions. Descriptive statistics indicate that respondents generally hold neutral to moderately positive perceptions of their career development and workplace conditions, with social capital, digital networking, and mentorship emerging as key facilitators. Lower mean scores related to leadership training, awards, and early employment alignment highlight areas for organizational focus to enhance professional growth. Collectively, these findings portray a digitally capable, motivated workforce with strong potential for career advancement, yet requiring strategic interventions in recognition, leadership development, and early career support.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that young, educated, and digitally proficient employees form the backbone of the contemporary workforce, possessing the skills and motivation required for professional growth. The socio-demographic and workplace data reveal that respondents are predominantly in the early stages of their careers, actively engaging in professional development opportunities and leveraging digital networks to advance their career trajectories. Factor analysis confirmed the presence of five meaningful components explaining a substantial proportion of variance, highlighting mentorship, professional associations, early career experiences, skill alignment, and workplace environment as critical determinants of career progression. While respondents generally report moderate satisfaction with workplace conditions and career support, areas such as leadership training effectiveness, recognition through awards, and alignment of early employment opportunities with personal interests require attention. These gaps underscore the need for organizations to implement targeted interventions, including structured mentorship programs, enhanced recognition systems, and robust early career planning. Overall, the findings provide valuable insights into the factors shaping career development and professional growth among young professionals. By addressing the identified gaps and leveraging strengths such as digital literacy, social networking, and engagement in professional associations, organizations can foster a supportive environment that enhances employee satisfaction, skill acquisition, and long-term

retention. The study thus contributes to understanding the interplay between personal attributes, workplace characteristics, and professional growth, offering practical implications for workforce development in digitally driven and knowledge-intensive industries.

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