

# Deterrents to Pursue Passion: A Study on Millennials

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to find out what passion means to oneself and why millennials fail to pursue their passion.

This phenomenological type of qualitative research was conducted through purposive sampling and by participation of 16 millennials.

The data were collected by an in depth semi-structured interview. All the interviews were transcribed and analyzed inductively.

Through this study we could understand what passion means to oneself and we could see that it is something that brings joy and is a driving force for some people, bringing content and motivating oneself. The study shows the dissonance and regrets faced due to the shift that millennials made and how they faced it. To understand the dissonance they went through, we observed their emotions like frustration, and even a season of depression they went through. Some of the coping mechanisms we found out were accepting the present, spiritual encouragement, developing new interests and social involvement among peers. The results of this study shows what caused them to shift from their passion to the current situation and participants explained the hindrances they faced in life like family challenges, uncertainty in industry, societal influence and lack of guidance. Finally, the study shows some reasons why millennials can't pursue their passion at all, where participants express their constraints and how they don't see any hope in future.

## Introduction

Passion is defined as a strong inclination towards a self- defining activity that people like (or love), find important, and in which they invest time and energy (Robert and Jeremie, 2013).

Higher levels of work passion have been associated with manifold positive outcomes, such as higher perseverance, engagement, and performance (Burke & Fiksenbaum, 2009; Duckworth, Peterson,

Matthews, & Kelly, 2007; Ho, Wong, & Lee, 2011; Zigarmi, Nimon, Houson, Witt, & Diehl, 2009). But the expectation to be passion for work is not always met. When employees experience less passion for their work than they desire — what we call a “passion gap” — then this expectation-experience discrepancy may lead them to look for a new job in the hope of finding a more passion-filled job elsewhere (Jon M, Christopher To, Jochen and Modupe, 2017).

Conversely, feeling unable to pursue a calling may undermine psychological wellbeing by producing a high degree of frustration (Scheier and Carver, 1989), disappointment (Bell, 1985), or regret (Gilovich and Medvec, 1995), which may ultimately hinder job performance (Wright and Cropanzano, 2000). Indeed, recent research suggests that the process of searching for a calling is associated with feelings of discomfort, indecision, and identity confusion (Duffy and Sedlacek, 2007).

Since most adults spend more than half their waking lives at work, unfulfilled occupational passion is a potentially severe concern for individuals. The pervasive encouragement to heed the call raises a perplexing question: what happens when someone misses their passion?

Little research has addressed how people cope with passion for a missed calling (Justin M. Berg, 2007). A deeper understanding of this phenomenon will offer theoretical insight into how individuals deal with the adversity of not pursuing a career in the field of their passion.

## **Participants**

The essence of the research project necessitated a qualitative approach, by which it was possible to examine in depth the opinions of the participants who did not pursue their passion. The data is collected by the interview method from millennials through purposive sampling. Participants who were millennials were considered for the study because there is a small debate among the millennials that they would all like to find a flow in the work they do. The question that isn't clear is: does one find flow because they are inherently good at the job or is it because one loves it so much that they outwork everyone else to get there. Stephanie Denning (2015) in a Forbes article discusses whether millennials should follow their passion. Purposive sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002).

Using purposive sampling, which was continued until the data was saturated, we interviewed 16 millennials who failed to pursue their passion.

## **Procedure**

Participants were given explanations regarding the study, purpose and methods. The participants had consented for this study, and they were informed of their right to confidentiality.

Once the respondents consented to be interviewed, they were assured of the confidentiality of the interviews.

Interviews were conducted, each of which lasted for about 45 minutes to 1 hour. We conducted the interviews in a quiet place without any distractions and the entire interview was recorded.

The audio and video recordings were later transcribed and the data were examined.

## Method

In order to understand why people fail to pursue their passion, we used qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, which are particularly appropriate for comprehending complex and multifaceted processes (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablynski, 1999).

Our Objectives were:

- To study what passion means to oneself
- To understand if they had any dissonance and regret due to the shift that they made and how they faced it
- To understand what caused them to shift from their passion to the current situation
- To understand why millennials can't pursue their passion

Our research questions included:

1. Are you happy with what you are pursuing right now?
  - a. If yes, has this been your passion always?
  - b. If no, what were you interested in?
2. What comes to your mind when you hear the word "passion"?
3. Why have you decided to do what you are pursuing right now rather than what you really wanted to pursue?
4. What made you choose to do what you are doing currently?
5. Do you try to pursue your passion along with what you are doing now? If yes, how do you manage them alongside?
6. Have you found a new passion or an area that you find interesting recently?
7. Please tell me the story of how you chose your current field, with particular attention on any key milestones, events, or decisions along your career path.
8. Please tell me about the difficult decisions you faced on your career path. How did you handle this difficult decision?
9. Do you ever think about what it would have been like if you pursued a different occupation?
10. What are your plans for the future regarding your career

## Data Analysis

This study was carried out with a qualitative approach by content analysis. Content analysis is widely used in qualitative research and is used for phenomena in which the available knowledge is fragmented. This is an appropriate method for obtaining condensed and broad descriptions of a phenomenon. (Elo and Kyngas 2008, Hsieh and Shannon 2005).

The audio files of the interview were transcribed verbatim for the data analysis. The transcripts were then read several times and their meanings units were specified and condensed with a description close to the text. After that, a list of codes was developed and reviewed semantically. Then, by determining the similarities and differences in the meanings, similar codes were assigned at a more abstract level using a reduction and induction method. Data analyses were performed by the first author, and all codes and categories were confirmed with the Second author during periodic meetings, there was consensus

among the authors regarding data analysis. Therefore, the researchers defined some acceptable subcategories and categories.

## Results

### 1. Meaning of Passion

The study on the first objective which was to understand what passion means to oneself led us into four different categories: brings joy, driving force, brings content and motivating oneself, and fourteen subcategories.

Themes	Sub Themes
Source of Joy	Source of constant happiness
	Enjoyable
	Brings love and emotion
	Worth doing it
Driving Force	Willingness to face challenge
	Doesn't let you sleep or rest
	Readiness to sacrifice to do something one likes
Source of Contentment	Brings satisfaction
	Pride
	One puts whole heart into it
	Never bored of doing
	Something you are best at doing
Motivates Oneself	Motivation through failures
	Something that never dies in oneself

#### 1.1. Source of Joy

This category indicates that it brings joy when you do something that is your passion. The subcategories under this category includes: source of constant happiness, enjoyable, brings love and emotion and worth doing it. These subcategories are explained in detail below.

##### 1.1.1. Source of Constant Happiness

It indicates that passion to oneself brings constant happiness and joy. The person finds happiness in following something that is passionate to oneself as sample 1 says, "For me, passion has always been, yeah. It's something that drives you to be like, you know, every day you get up and you are happy to go for work."

##### 1.1.2. Enjoyable

It indicates that a person is able to enjoy their work when it's their passion. Work doesn't feel like work when one is passionate about their work as sample 14 says, "I would say passion is when you are interested to do a job. Like, if you're not happy, then that is not your passion. You should be able to enjoy your Job. Yes, there will be stress, but still you will be happy."

### **1.1.3. Brings Love and Emotion**

It indicates that when one follows their passions, they do it out of love. They experience a mix of emotions when they talk about their passion. Sample 7 explains that, “Passion, you can say it's something that you love, it comes out of emotion, out of lot of emotions, and something that you wholeheartedly like to do, and you or you want to want to do it in your achieve it and do it in your life. It would bring you happiness.”

### **1.1.4. Worth doing it**

This means that though the participants would face many obstacles, at the end it is worth doing it. You do it out of your own sheer will despite the obstacles as quoted by sample 13, “Being able to do something without thinking of it as work. It's like wanting to get up and wanting to go to work. If you don't really like getting up in the morning and working, then there is a struggle. But this isn't going to be a struggle, because you want to do it.”

## **1.2. Driving Force**

This category indicates that passion is like a driving force which motivates you to push further. The subcategories under this category includes: Willingness to face Challenge, Doesn't let you sleep or rest and readiness to sacrifice to do something one like. These subcategories are explained in detail below.

### **1.2.1. Willingness to Face Challenge**

This subcategory explains that despite the many challenges the person has to go through, they would still push through it due to sheer will. Sample 15 quoted “I used to cry when I got my marks and then I will wash my face and I will go back to study. That's the drive of passion. You have the right to be sad, but you can do better next time right?”

That's the motivation or passion. Also I have realized, maybe the mistake will be in me, that's why I am not passing right? So if you have the courage to accept the mistake and still if you are practicing for making it right, that practice part is the motivation. It's not the medal that counts, it's the practice part that is the passion. My bed was filled with books, I was so passionate about my career in Chartered Accountancy that even my Uncle called me stubborn and crazy. So that mind that can withstand all the insults will always win in the end.”

### **1.2.2. Doesn't let You Sleep or Rest**

This subcategory talks about how when someone is passionate, it doesn't let them sleep well or it wakes them up from sleep as well. Sample 5 quoted “For me, what is passion is like, it won't let you sleep. As simple as that, it won't let you sleep. And I have had many sleepless nights”, and Sample 8 quoted “I will say that passion is something which does not lead you to sleep. Or if you're in a very, like deep sleep. And if people are talking passion nearby, will automatically wake up can be a part of that conversation. Yeah, for example, I learned a lot of skills in MBA, but it won't make me wake up at 3am. But if somebody's playing my favorite song, I will wake up and jam.”

These both responses above show how the respondents are passionate that it disrupts their sleep when they think about it.

### **1.2.3. Readiness to Sacrifice to do Something One Likes**

This subcategory talks about how one is willing to sacrifice things in order to attain their passion. Sample 12 mentions “Passion means something you are interested in. You will sacrifice everything to achieve your passion.”

## **1.3. Source of Contentment**

This category indicates that when people follow their passion, they are content. The subcategories under this category includes: Brings satisfaction, Makes oneself proud, One puts whole heart into it, Never bored of doing, Something you are best at doing. These subcategories are explained in detail below.

### **1.3.1. Brings Satisfaction**

For most of the candidates, following their passion gave them a sense of satisfaction. Because at the end of the day, They are able to do what they want to do. Participant 2 mentions that “Passion is something that brings you happiness, not happiness exactly, but then brings you content, It might not be always be a helpful, happy thing. But you're always satisfied with what you did, what you were, doing other things. So following passion is something that you will be happy about, content about, at the end of the day, when you come back. It may not always be happiness, it may be some hard times some difficult moments, but then you're still you're okay with going through all that, knowing that this is what I wanted to do.”

### **1.3.2. Pride**

This subcategory explains how following one's passion would make their loved ones proud. Participant 6 talks about how they looked up to their loved ones and then he quotes “So passion is something that we can see in people. So I got into this passion of music because of my cousin, brother. So he was drummer. And I looked up to him, I liked I really love how he used to play the drums, how he used to play these different programs all around. So, you know, it was just a huge dream for me, so I can play with him or play so that he can be proud of me, you know, so I always had that passion. That's to look up to him. And then you know, I could please him. So that I can be as as on the same level as him as well”

### **1.3.3 One puts Whole Heart into it**

This subcategory explains who one is committed to put their whole heart in order to achieve their passion. Participant 7 quotes “Passion, you can say it's something that you love, it comes out of emotion, out of lot of emotions, and something that you wholeheartedly like to do, and you or you want to want to do it in your achieve it and do it in your life. It would bring your happiness.” This explains their intensity of passion as well.

### **1.3.4. Never Bored of doing it**

Some participants pointed out that if you pursue your passion, you will never be bored of it. Participant 11 explains “For me it is when you do something, you won't get bored of doing that then you will keep on doing. No, no matter whatever happens now under whatever comes what, whatever restricts you, you still keep on doing it. So no one is there to stop you or no one nothing can make you feel bored about doing something that you like, says I'm this my passion. Yeah, I basically want to enjoy it.”

### 1.3.5. Something You are Best at doing

One participant mentions that if you are pursuing your passion, you ought to be the best at it and the participant quotes "I want other people to appreciate me and mention that, "Yeah, he is good at this particular thing" or They have to say something like, "Your best, your best in this thing".

## 1.4. Motivates Oneself

This category illustrates that if one pursues their passion, they are motivated to push through and stretch as much as they can. They are always motivated to work towards their passion no matter what. The subcategories under this category includes: Motivation through failures and Something that never dies in oneself. They are explained in detail below.

### 1.4.1. Motivation through Failures

This subcategory explains how despite multiple failures, one perseveres. Participant 15 talks about "My bed was filled with books, I was so passionate about my career in Chartered Accountancy that even my Uncle called me stubborn and crazy. So that mind can withstand all the insults will always win in the end" This shows how despite many taunts, she decided to persevere

### 1.4.2. Something that Never Dies in Oneself

The participant talks about how despite all the difficulties, she still has hope for the future. Participant 16 quotes "There are a lot of things where you have to leave things and move forward. But that doesn't mean that you can't come back. I still have a hope. Even though I can't be like I can't continue in sports, I can be a coach. Someday, I can join a company which is related to sports. So I can always come back. There is always a way. Maybe it's the decision of God. But maybe he has opened some gate, I would find some gate in my way. We just need to wait and like try hard that okay, I'll find somewhere else related to something else. So that way that passion won't also die and you could end up somewhere really good."

This shows how determined the participant is about her passion.

## 2. Overcoming Dissonance Faced

The study on the second objective was to understand if they had any dissonance and regret due to the shift that they made and how they faced it.

This led us into five different categories: Emotions, Accepting present, spiritual encouragement, new interests, social involvement and 19 subcategories.

Themes	Sub Themes
Emotions	Frustration
	Regrets
	Blame game
	Depression
	Complete denial and inability to face reality
	Confusion



Accepting Present	Convincing oneself
	Avoids looking back
	Assuring oneself that there is hope in the future
Spiritual Encouragement	Believing in God's will in one's life
	Prayer
	Putting faith in God to persist in life despite difficulties
New Interests	Busy adjusting to new surroundings
	Finding interest in something new
	Taking up similar courses and keeping oneself busy
Social Involvement	Good friends and groups
	Counseling

## 2.1. Emotions

This indicates the emotions that the participants went through when they had to shift from the field of their passion. They faced dissonance and regrets throughout the process of shifting to a new field. The subcategories under this category includes: Frustration, regrets, blame game, depression, complete denial and inability to face reality and confusion. They are explained in detail below.

### 2.1.1. Frustration

This indicates that frustration was one of the emotions that the participants went through at one point time when they had to shift from the field of their passion as participant 5 says, "There was a point when I felt so frustrated that look, one day, I came up to my father saying that I want to be an actor." The participants were upset about the fact that they had to give up on what they like doing the most.

### 2.1.2. Regrets

Majority of the participants had regrets, not pursuing their passion and it bothered them a lot throughout the process. Participant 4 says, "I used to regret it every single day. Because I have friends who are in the line and they're doing so pretty well. So good. And then I like the confidence they have. I see the personality they have after having that sort of zeal inside them because of the career they carry, so I wanted to carry the same thing."

While some have coped up with the frustrations and regrets that they had at one point of time by accepting the reality, some participants are still having regrets like participant 6 who wanted to be a movie producer says, "I always regret, like whenever I see a good movie or so whatever good content I see. So I will definitely regret something. Uh, I did not do something like this. Also the one, the only thing, which I think whenever I regret I did not do these kind of things, cinema, cinematic fields."

### 2.1.3. Blame Game

Some participants played the blame game, blaming their parents and society for not allowing them to pursue what they loved like participant 4 says, "I was very much upset that I could not do. I used to blame them also, because of you I'm doing BBA okay, you have ruined my future. Just remember if I don't able to do something, it's you who ruined it. I was usually like full blame game to them so that I



don't have to own anything.” The participant was full of frustrations and regrets to an extent where she started blaming the people around her so that she doesn't have to own anything even if she fails.

#### **2.1.4. Depression**

Some of the participants were having a hard time trying to accept the present and cope up. They went through a phase of depression like participant 8 says “so as I said, I had this one year gap before joining college, I actually did go through some depression. I had some hard times.”

Some were shattered as they had dedicated and sacrificed their whole childhood in training to become what they were passionate about, like participant 15 who wanted to be an athlete and was on training throughout her childhood, sacrificing her favorite delicacies, says, “I was shattered. I went through depression. I wouldn't talk nor eat properly.” This shows how much it affected them throughout the process.

#### **2.1.5. Complete Denial and Inability to Face Reality**

This subcategory indicates that some participants were in denial and could not face the reality. Participant 9 who wanted to be an astrophysicist says, “I was in complete denial for one and half years, complete denial, like no, no, I'm not doing this. For one year, you can say I took a break. Like I went away, went out whenever I used to see stars. It was really hard for me, because I feel like I didn't do anything. I was just running away from that.

#### **2.1.6. Confusion**

Some participants were in a state of confusion trying to understand if they did the right thing by shifting to another field. Participant 14 who wanted to pursue a career in the field of fashion says, “I had mixed feelings, I would say, because, in my mind, many things were just coming up that like, what if I do MBA, Fashion management and I can't prove my parents wrong?” So due to this state of mind, the participant felt dissonance and frustrations.

### **2.2. Accepting Present**

This category indicates how the millennials cope up with the dissonance that they had while trying to make the shift from what their passion was. They accepted the present situation just as it is and moved forward. The subcategories include: convincing oneself, avoids looking back and assuring oneself that there is hope. They are explained below in detail.

#### **2.2.1. Convincing Oneself**

This indicates that millennials try to convince themselves to blend in with the present by accepting and adapting to the reality and making peace with it. Participant 2 says, “Before I joined the college, it used to bother me. During the initial days it was bothering me. But after that you join a college, you reach the hostel, you just forget that part, you just blend in and try to focus on what you are.” This shows that they try to forget that part and accept the hardships in life.

#### **2.2.2. Avoids Looking Back**

Participant 12 who wanted to be a doctor says, “I don't look back. Because if I knew that if I live with regret, I wouldn't be living in the present I'll be living in the past. And what's the point it's done. I am here right now, I can only think about how I can better myself in the present and in the future.” She tries

to live in the present because she knows she can't change the past but the present. It indicates that they focus more on their future by not looking back, which will indeed cause regrets.

### **2.2.3. Assuring Oneself that there is Hope in the Future**

Another way of accepting the present is that millennials assure themselves by believing that there is some hope in the future. Participant 6 says, "The one thing you can like, even after 10 years or 20 years, when I have money, I can do something like, I can produce for them, or I can like, sit and write a script. I made myself satisfied that you have time, you can do one day, you will do something. So, that kind of hope is there." He assures himself by studying hard and trying to make money, so that he can do something related to his passion later on in future.

## **2.3. Spiritual Encouragement**

This category shows the spiritual involvement and beliefs of some participants to overcome the struggles and emotions they face. The subcategories under this category include: believing in God's will in one's life, prayer and putting faith in God to persist in life despite the difficulties. They are explained below in detail.

### **2.3.1. Believing in God's Will in One's Life**

The study indicates that some participants believe that God has a purpose in one's life and accepts that whatever they are doing currently is because of God's will and plan as participant 1 says, "I've accepted the fact I think that was probably God's will for my life. Yeah, that is what consoled me. New things open up and I'm willing for new opportunity."

### **2.3.2. Prayer**

Participant 8 who was going through a depression caused due to the dissonance because of the shift says, "I did deal with some depressions. I got out of it as well but it took a lot of time. It's not something that I did. It's like, I'm a Christian. So I prayed about it." It indicates that prayer was a factor that helped in getting out of the state of depression completely even though it took some time.

### **2.3.3. Putting Faith in God to Persist in Life despite Difficulties**

This indicates that millennials believe putting their faith in God to help them persist throughout their life despite the hardships and challenges they face. Participant 10 says, "Beggars can't be choosy, I consider myself as a beggar to live in front of God. And God gave me obstacles. But on the other hand, God helped me, like overcome and made it an opportunity. I believe that whether life will be tough, or whether like, very, very nice, I'm able to cover all my parts against all odds." They put their trust in God to help them throughout the obstacles they face in life.

## **2.4. New Interests**

This category indicates that millennials explore and find new interests. They take efforts to pursue a career in that new field. The subcategories include: busy adjusting to new surroundings, finding interest in something new and taking up similar courses and keeping oneself busy. They are explained in detail below.

### **2.4.1. Busy Adjusting to New Surroundings**

This subcategory indicates that millennials move around places due to certain factors like family relocating to a new place. So when they relocate themselves, they will be busy adjusting to the new environment and their culture and lifestyle. Participant 1 says, “In those transition period, probably one more thing was, I moved from Mumbai to Kerala during my 10th standard, before my 10th standard. 10th standard I was in one school, 11th standard I went to another school. So the whole adjustment, my lifestyle adjustment was, that process was going on. And among that was, along with that was the passion, the career change, also. That is probably one reason why I didn't get enough time or something to process the change that I actually went through.”

### **2.4.2. Finding Interest in Something New**

This indicates that some millennials find interest in something new regarding their career. Despite failures trying to follow their passion, they find a new passion. Participant 3 in the interview said, “I started reading a lot of books. And I did feel a little unmotivated. So I did read a lot of self help books that motivated me. After I came out of that unmotivated negative bubble. Then I started to think, something different. That's when I realized that maybe I can start my own business. So, yeah, and what should I start? That was the main question. And so yeah, I have had a lot of acne from a very little age. So I've always been insecure about that. And so when I thought that maybe I'll start a business, maybe I thought I could start a skincare business, which would help girls like me, who were always insecure about their acne.” This indicates how a millennial tries to explore and find what they like. She wanted to pursue chartered accountant course initially, but due to repeated failures in the entrance exam, she felt unmotivated. So to motivate herself she started reading books which eventually led to finding her new passion, that is starting her own business.

### **2.4.3. Taking up Similar Courses and Keeping Oneself Busy**

Some participants try to keep themselves busy by taking similar courses online and studying them, trying to keep up with the current affairs of the industry that their passion belongs to, like participant 16 who wanted to pursue psychology says, “I tried accepting the situation as it is. I took up courses related to psychology and that helped me and kept me motivated.” This indicates how a millennial who failed to pursue a career in the field of their passion keeps herself somehow related and near to her long lost passion by learning something similar to what she likes.

## **2.5. Social Involvement**

This category indicates that some millennials involve themselves socially and interact with their peers or friend groups to help themselves overcome the frustrations and regret. The subcategories include: good friends and group, and counseling. They are explained below in detail.

### **2.5.1. Good Friends and Group**

This indicates that participants involved themselves in interacting with their friends and groups that helped them overcome the negative emotions that they were experiencing, which also helped participant 8 come out of depression as he says, “I had good friends who would actually talk to me. There were times when actually, honestly, when you realize who your true friends are and who your real friends are. Because then I only have those few number of people I can actually count on my hands, on my fingers, that actually stood by my side, helped me get out of my situation.”

### 2.5.2. Counseling

Some of the participants had to go through a counseling session to overcome what they were going through. Participant 15 was shattered when the doctors told her that she could no longer be an athlete, which was her passion. She says, “I went for counseling. And post 6 months, I started recovering. My dad helped me to distract myself through driving and all.” An unforeseen circumstance resulted in the permanent ailment in her health, destroying her whole career. In such cases, the individual has to undergo an external support like counseling to bring them up and live a successful life.

### 3. Reason to Shift

The study on the third objective which was to understand what caused them to shift from their passion to the current situation led us into five different categories: uncertainty in industry, family challenges, societal influence, lack of guidance and unanticipated challenges, and eighteen subcategories.

Themes	Sub Themes
Uncertainty in Industry	Unstable income
	Fear of risks and failure
	Lack of data to show success
	Nepotism
Family Challenges	Need to support family
	Inability to take risks
Societal Influence	Lack of social acceptance
	Lack of family support and acceptance
	Gender discrimination
Lack of Guidance	Lack of knowledge about the opportunities available
	Assumptions made without knowledge
Unanticipated Challenges	Medical reason
	Repeated failing of eligibility exams

### 3.1. Uncertainty in the Industry

This category indicates that there is a lot of uncertain situations that comes one's way when pursuing their passion. They do not know what the future holds and if it will help them support their family. The subcategories under this category includes: Unstable income, realization of need for independent life, fear of risks and failures, lack of data to show success and nepotism. They are explained in detail below.

#### 3.1.1. Unstable Income

Few participants spoke about how they were unsure if they will be able to make a stable career out of their passion since the industry is uncertain. Participant 1 talks about his family struggles and quotes “Being in a band requires lot of time and money. Since the income is unstable from the band, the band members started leaving and joined companies like Capgemini, TCS etc. since they had to meet their financial obligations.

I had to leave the band when my dad was paralysed. Hence I had to step up and join my dad's business to support my family."

### **3.1.2. Fear of Risks and Failure**

Majority of the participants faced the fear of failure and hence weren't sure about their passion. Participant 14 said "I had mixed feelings, I would say, because, in my mind, many things were just coming up that like, what if I do MBA, Fashion management and I can't prove my parents wrong? So I had fear of failure. But I won't say that my parents are wrong. They are just protective about my career. I had major fear of failure, so it was my fault."

### **3.1.3. Lack of Data to Show Success**

One of the participants explained how he was not able to pursue his passion because his parents pointed out the fact that his chances of success were very slim. He quoted "my parents were not so supportive about being an actor, because they don't have any backup data to support that I will shine in this particular field and second thing is that it's a 90% failure. So if 100 People are going to be an actor, only 10 will survive in the field."

### **3.1.4. Nepotism**

Few participants agreed to the fact that nepotism prevailed in the entertainment industry and hence they were not sure if they should take that risk. Participant 14 briefly mentions "You can't avoid nepotism. So I don't have any connection with the film industry. Not even to start. These reasons resulted me to drop my plan"

## **3.2. Family Challenges**

This category talks about how family was one of the major deterrents for millennials to pursue their passion. The subcategories under these include: Need to support family and inability to take risks.

### **3.2.1. Need to Support Family**

This subcategory talks about how the participant couldn't follow their passion because he/she had the responsibility to take care of their family. Participant 9 says "I told you, my family was not in the right situation. So I did not have an opportunity to like, I'll go, I go to film-making and go to film schools, direction and go wait for newer opportunities. I did not have option like that."

### **3.2.2. Inability to Take Risk**

This subcategory talks about how the participant did not take the risk to pursue their passion for reasons like family pressure and Participant 14 mentions "So when I was about to fill the NIFT Form, I had a conversation with my family and they were like this course is very risky, Nobody in our family has done this before. If something goes wrong, then what will you do. But I told them that I will be happy if I do this course, since I was very passionate about it. We had a lot of conversation But at the same time, I didn't want to go against my parents since they are the ones who pays my fees as well."

## **3.3. Societal Influence**

This category explains how society is one of the major factors which impacts millennials while pursuing their passion. The subcategories: Lack of Social Acceptance, Lack of Family Support and Acceptance, Gender Discrimination.

### **3.3.1. Lack of Societal Acceptance**

This subcategory talks about how participants felt like society won't accept or encourage their pursuing of passion as such. Participant 4 explains "The social circumstances around us was that, you have to do either engineering or doctor, we have only two options. So that's why basically, I didn't have any other options, even though I badly wanted to do Astronomy."

This shows how the societal norms discouraged him to pursue their passion.

### **3.3.2. Lack of Family Support and Acceptance**

Majority of the participants talks about how due to lack of family support, they could not pursue their passion. This shows how crucial family is during the decision making process of one's career. Participant 6 says "My parents asked me Questions like How can you live a life with music? How are you gonna earn for yourself? How will my relatives going to react when you are going to pursue music? You know, there were these questions like, how, why? How will you make your life out of it? You know? Yeah., like, what would people think about you being in a field like that? And like that, you know, what if what if you don't succeed in your passion? These are the questions that were followed up by my parents."

### **3.3.3. Gender Discrimination**

One of the participants described how she was denied her desire to pursue her career just because she was a female. Her family expected her to take a safe career so that she could prioritize her family first. She quotes "It's because I was born female, that I actually couldn't be a doctor. My mother knew me as a child that I wanted to be a doctor, she was very well aware of it. She knew about my passion. But she said that your family is first, your career is second! So if you take CA, you will be able to take care of your family, as well as earn."

## **3.4. Lack of Guidance**

This category indicated that millennials lack proper guidance to pursue a career that they are passionate about. The subcategories under this category includes: Lack of knowledge about the opportunities available and assumptions made without knowledge. These are explained in detail below.

### **3.4.1. Lack of Knowledge about the Opportunities Available**

Some of the participants did not have the opportunity to have someone to guide them or tell them about the opportunities that are available ahead of them to be pursued in their relevant industry. Participant 12 says, "no one was there to tell me that hey, listen, do you like music? Why not, try for that? You know, so since there's no one there to tell, it was just that I love music. I like to play the instrument. But it didn't. It didn't come like oh, I want to make a career out of it. That was, that didn't even come to mind."

### **3.4.2. Assumptions made without Knowledge**

Participant 12 says, "we all are brought up in a community where music is just thought like it's an art. It's not something where you can make a career out of it. That is, that is how we were brought up, you know." This indicates that the society and individual, both lacked knowledge due to which they had assumptions made up in their minds.



### 3.5. Unanticipated Challenges

This indicates the unforeseen challenges or situations that come up in one's life that can't be avoided. The subcategories include: Medical reason and repeated failing of eligibility exams. They are explained in detail below.

#### 3.5.1. Medical Reason

This subcategory talks about how participants were not able to pursue their passion due to medical reasons. Participant 2 quotes "When I was at 9th I wanted to be a pilot. But when you actually understand and try to know what all you have to do, what is the eligibility criteria etc. I slowly found out things. So the main core for being a pilot is that you go through the medical. So for me, one of the things was my eyesight. Hence I would definitely not clear the test. So slowly, slowly that dream began to fade. Talked to some people, understood this was not going to work. Yeah, and that is how that is when around 10th I had to actually give up on that because I understood there was no other way around it. So I decided to go for commerce.

#### 3.5.2. Repeated Failure of Eligibility Exams

This subcategory talks about how the participant couldn't pursue their passion because they couldn't pass the eligibility exams despite several trials, Participant 15 quotes "I couldn't clear my CA at first and it was a very bad experience for me and I was so depressed. I Tried again and failed successfully again. My father asked me to do something else rather than this as even he was getting the pressure of me growing up. I had given my 2 years for this preparations I was okay with it till 23 but later My relatives started asking me, friends started asking me what my plan was and i didn't know what to answer them back."

### 4. Deterrence Faced

The study on the fourth objective, which was to understand why millennials can't pursue their passion at all, led us into two categories: medical reason and social constraints, and three subcategories. Four out of sixteen participants appeared to have abandoned their passion completely while other eleven participants still have some hopes in future to do something inclined to their passion.

Themes	Sub Themes
Medical Reason	Incorrigible situation
Social Constraints	Late to start all over again
	Skill based or Knowledge based industry

#### 4.1. Medical Reason

This category indicates that some participants had a medical condition that was stopping them from pursuing their passion. The subcategory under this was incorrigible situation and is explained in detail below.

##### 4.1.1. Incorrigible Situation

This category indicates that the medical issues two students had were not correctable. When they were asked if they have any hopes in future and if they tried correcting their medical issues, they mentioned that they tried everything possible and it has barred them from pursuing their passion at all and their



career path shifted. One participant said in the interview, “for general reasons I had underwent surgeries and all. But in the end, none of it would help because the core medical reason will not be changed. So that wouldn't get change so there was no reason in pursuing your medical option”.

The other participant who suffered a leg injury, could no longer be in the field of sports which was her field of passion, as she says in the interview, “I tried multiple times but my leg never allowed. Though my Doctor strictly advised me not to go on field anymore, I would still sneak out for practices. But my condition was getting worse, So eventually I had to give up.”

This depicts that they tried everything to correct the challenges that they were going through but they were in vain.

#### **4.2. Social Constraints**

The other category indicates the societal challenges that the other two participants went through which resulted in their change of career path, very different from their passion. The subcategories under this include: late to start all over again and skill based industry.

##### **4.2.1. Late to Start all over Again**

This subcategory indicates that the participant has reached a situation where even if they want to start all over again, it's too late as it will take too much time and the participant has come a long way. The participant said, “So I can take M.Tech. in astrophysics and I can again try to move away but it's a very hard process because I have to learn this physics other stuff from back in 12th and all, that four year thing I have to learn within this one six months gap. The social constraints, everything if you're taking into consideration it is hard, right.”

Acquiring the knowledge of his passion's domain, right from higher secondary school and graduation, will take a long time. The participant does not stand a chance to overcome this factor of social constraint and feels it's hard.

##### **4.2.2. Skill-based or Knowledge-based Industry**

This subcategory indicates how a person can shift from one path of career to another if it is a skill based industry. But if it is a knowledge based industry, the path cannot be changed as acquiring the knowledge takes time and cannot be done all over again as the participant said, “I know of people who are CA, but who wanted to be in the movie industry. So that is something they can switch into, because that's a skill. But this is not skill. This is knowledge based. You need a deep course of study which needs to be done. For me as a person. I don't have any future scope.”

This indicates that the participant does not stand a chance in having hopes for a future aligned to the passion.

#### **Discussion**

The findings of this study shows why millennials fail to pursue a career that is associated with their passion. They face challenges at an individual level or from society, discouraging them to take the risks in pursuing their passion. So they either abandon their passion and take up something else or find a new thing that interests them and finds passion in them. Justin M. Berg et al. (2010), in his study to build

theory on how people cope with passion for an unfulfilled calling, indicates that people employ three job crafting techniques (task emphasizing, job expanding, role reframing) and three leisure crafting techniques (hobby pursuit, vicarious pursuit, prospective pursuit) to create opportunities for fulfilling their callings. Our study complements Justin's study that people adopt ways to fulfill their callings by pursuing passion as their hobbies. However, the study has not evidenced any of the job crafting techniques to incorporate an element of their passionate field into what they are currently doing.

Our study indicates the emotions like frustrations and depression that the millennials go through while coping up with their missed calling. They face dissonance and regrets because of the shift from pursuing their passion to what they are currently doing. All the participants that we interviewed agreed on the difficult times that they went through, trying to cope up and overcome the difficulties by accepting the present and making peace with it, through counseling and through friends by sharing their feelings to them. This complements the study conducted by Nitin Joseph et al. (2021) to assess the coping mechanisms among medical undergraduate students in a large Midwestern university. In his study, he found that the majority of students preferred sharing their personal problems with parents 211 (52.7%) followed by friends 202 (50.5%). None of the participants in our study shared the emotions that they were going through with their parents which contradicts the 52.7% sample in Nitin's study, but they shared with their friends and it helped them to overcome that difficult situation.

Millennials blend in with the present and learn to live with it. They accept and adapt to the reality, convincing themselves and eventually make peace with it. Susan Folkman et al. (1988) in their study explores the ways emotions and coping influence each other in what must ultimately be seen as a dynamic, mutually reciprocal relationship. Their study indicates that coping in an anticipatory context offers an important opportunity to influence what happens at the point of confrontation by preventing harm or facilitating a benefit. After confrontation, coping must be aimed at managing the consequences and their implications for the future. Our study reassures the findings of Susan Folkman that millennials accept the fact that they have failed to pursue their passion and manage the consequences they face in the future.

Gitima Sharma et al. (2020) indicates the different types of passion: harmonious passion and obsessive passion. Our study does not indicate the types of passion that a millennial fails to pursue, which can be considered as a scope for future research studies.

Our study indicates how millennials are failing to pursue what interests them. Some circumstances may stand against them, leading them to take up some other path. Some may not be even good at what they are passionate about and it's always easier to figure out what you're good at than what you're passionate about. This finding complements the findings of the study done by Douglas T. Hall and Dawn E. Chandler (2005) where their study indicated that a deeper sense of fulfillment comes only when those individual's attainments measure up favorably with one's own inner purpose and true success is not just getting what you want in life, it's about liking what you get. Millennials eventually cope up and find happiness in new things and try to succeed in the path that they have chosen.

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