

Protean Career Orientation and Career Success: Does Career Planning Mediate the Relationship? Study of the Employees in HEIs in Jaffna District, Sri Lanka

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Abstract: Employees' career orientation is considered as one of the major determinants of career satisfaction. The present study has twin aims to examine the relationship between protean career orientation and career success as well as measuring the mediation of career planning on the relationship between protean career orientation and career success. 154 Employees from higher education institutions in the Jaffna district were selected to get the responses. A self-administrated five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect the required data. Two hypotheses were formulated and subsequently tested using the Partial Least Squares method. The study found that there is a significant relationship between protean career orientation and career success. Career planning partially mediates the relationship between protean career orientation and career success. The study will support top-level management in the sample organizations to understand the importance of protean career orientation in determining the career success of their employees.

Keywords: *Protean Career Orientation, Career Planning, Career Success, Higher Education Institutions*

Introduction

Psychological career success of employees brings a lot of healthiest matters to the organizations and the personal life of the employees as it supports to create a pleasurable environment in the organizations and to bring intrinsic motivation to the employees. Employees all over the world give priority to their career development-related activities. Individuals' involvement in career development activities is determined by career orientation of them. The career orientation of individuals plays a vital role in determining their career-

related moves and outcomes. Traditional thoughts of career focus on the organizational agenda for career development due to the strong belief of organizations are responsible for the career development of their employees. Psychological contract between employer and employees becomes transactional instead of loyal due to the changes that take place in the work environment (Hall, 1996; 2004). Protean career orientation (PCO) is one of the new concepts and introduced by Hall in 1976. The concept holds the view of the transformation of the responsibility for the career development of

employees from the organization to individuals. It relates to two major competencies such as adaptability and identity which are higher in individuals who possess a higher degree of self-directedness and value-driven attitude. Self-directed career management is the ability of individuals who can adapt changes and regulate behavior to meet the demand of the work and personal environment. On the other hand, according to the value-driven attitude, people shape and choose their careers based on the values that they have. It is identified via literature review that individuals in the organizations possess protean career orientation and it is common among people all over the world. Bridgstock, 2007; DiRenzo, 2010; Gubler, 2011; Zafar, 2017 and Shanthakumary 2019) and some others did extensive studies on the concept whereas Briscoe, Hall and DeMuth, 2006; De Vos and Soens, 2008; Herrmann, Hirschi and Baruch, 2015; Direnzo, Greenhaus and Weer, 2015; Supeli and Creed, 2015; Nishanthy and Kailasapathy, 2016; Shanthakumary, 2018 and Bardoel, 2019, empirically surveyed the association of PCO with different constructs.

Sri Lankan careerists are not exceptional for the changes that take place in the world of work as they exhibit protean career orientation in their career-related behaviors. Dissanayaka (2010/2011) stated that some of the Sri Lankan organizations already started to react to the new career attitude of the employees by incorporating outsourcing, contract basis employment, and flexible schedule. Shanthakumary (2018)

found employees in public sector HEIs in Jaffna district are high in self-directedness and value-driven aspects of PCO whereas Nishanthy and Kailasapathy (2016) pointed out the banking sector employees in Colombo district possess PCO. However, the literature on PCO is limited in Sri Lanka as very few research papers have been published available on websites. Hall and his associates (2004, 2017) initially specified that the main outcome of the higher level of PCO is psychological career success. One could observe that the Sri Lankan authors rarely studied career orientation and career development-related topics, though it is essential to deal with some of the burning issues of youth employment. Further, it is very unclear about the relationship between PCO and career success in the Sri Lankan context as the above-mentioned reason. The studies focus on samples from Jaffna district that pay greater attention to job satisfaction (Achhuthan, 2014; Shanthakumary, 2011; Velnampy, 2008) than career satisfaction. It is observed that very few studies have been carried out on career advancement (Tharshini, Kumar & Rathnasekara, 2016), career satisfaction (Srikantharajah, 2018). It is further observed that in most situations, researchers used career satisfaction as the synonym for job satisfaction/career success. Shanthakumary (2019, 2020) identified that career planning and career success are above the moderate level among the employees in the public and private sector in Jaffna district. However, the sample employees reported that they seek for best opportunities to portray their talents and to acquire more benefits

within the same HEI or similar than the present one. Therefore, identifying the rationale behind the continuous search for the best will support understanding the career attitude of the people, especially, the influence of PCO on career-related outcomes such as career success. Though the researcher identified a positive association between PCO and career planning, she did not evaluate the extent to which career planning moderates the relationship between PCO and career success. Therefore, the present study will support enriching the existing literature on career management. Career success of the individuals is important for the psychological wellbeing of them and the organization as it supports to improve the level of performance. Generally, employees in the public sector of Sri Lanka are willing to continue their bond with the present sector for job security and the social security system. They work with a single employer and accept linear progression or in some cases the lateral move within the sector. Freedom to decide on the public sector is limited but it is comparably high among the academics in HEIs. The study tries to find out the extent to which PCO is associated with the career success of academics and non-academics who work in HEIs in Jaffna district.

Objectives of the Study

The study set out to achieve the following objectives.

To assess the relationship between PCO and career success among the employees in HEIs in Jaffna district.

To examine the mediating effect of career planning on the relationship between PCO and career success.

Literature Review

Career Success

“Succedere” is the original word of ‘success’ from Latin, which means ‘to follow’. Career success is the positive reaction of a person towards his/ her career. Seibert and Kraimer (2001) defined career success as the positive psychological and work-related outcomes accumulated as a result of one’s work experiences. Similarly, Callanan (2003) defined it as the accumulation and psychological outcomes that result from one’s work performance (Callanan, 2003). Researchers measure it in objective and subjective terms. There are empirical studies carried out in considering career success as an outcome of many predictors. Rasdi, Ismail, and Garavan (2011) and Ng and Feldman (2014) examined the link between some of the determinants (demographic variables, human capital variables, individual variables, structural variables, and the behavioral variables) and career success. Three knowing competencies and career success (Eby, Butts, and Lockwood, 2003), Protean career orientation and career success (DiRenzo, 2010; Volmer and Spurk, 2010; Shanthakumary, 2019), Big five personality and career success (Dodangoda and Arachchige, 2015).

Protean Career Orientation (PCO) receives greater popularity among researchers due to the dramatic changes that take place in the career world. The term ‘protean’ derived

from 'proteus' the name of Greek's god, he can change his shape if there is a necessity. Hall (1996) stated protean careerists take steps to manage their career trajectories and not rely on organizations' standards. In a way, they value autonomy in vocational decision-making. Baruch (2015) described it as a phenomenon that takes place outside structures and traditional boundaries of organizational hierarchies, professional progress, or stable directions. The person takes the role of his or her agent. The core values of a protean career are freedom and growth. Subjective career success is recognized as the main success criteria (Hall,1976). Though he stated career success is an outcome of protean attitude, the researchers found links with other concepts such as organizational commitment (Fernandez and Enache, 2008; Briscoe and Finkelstein, 2009; Övgü Çakmak-Otluoğlu,2012; Nishanthi and Kailasapathy, 2016) employability (DiRenzo, 2010;Direnzo, Greenhuas, and Weer, 2015; Shanthakumary,2019) Work-life balance (DiRenzo, 2010;Direnzo, Greenhuas, and Weer, 2015; Shanthakumary,2019) intention to quit (Supeli & Creed,2015).

Career Planning

It is considered a most valuable matter in the personal development of individuals due to the increased intensity of competition for the best opportunities in the world of work. The highest achievers in a career and the average or lower-level achievement in a career is explained by career planning. Career planning is

one of the career development initiatives in which individuals set their career goals and pursue relevant career strategies (Gould, 1979; Greenhaus, 1971; Zikic and Klehe, 2006). Rogers, Creed, and Glendon (2008) say career planning is associated with career decision self-efficacy and high levels of goal-setting. Moreover, Greenhaus, Callnan, and Godstock (2010) pointed out career planning need to be done for short term and the long term, like other plans, short term plans to be in line with long term one, Many researchers study career planning and its association with various concepts like citizenship behavior (Al-Shawabkeh,2017); job satisfaction and career commitment (Ismail, Madrah, Aminudin and Ismail, 2013; Adekola, 2011); career development (Triandani and Anggriani, 2015).

Methodology

Sample and Instrumentation

The data required for the study were collected from 154 mid-career academic and non-academic staff members of HEIs in Jaffna district using a convenient sampling technique as they are good enough to have the experience to give responses to career satisfaction. The nonacademic sample consisted of executive staff only (Deputy Registrars, Senior assistant registrars, and assistant registrars). Due to the Covid 19 pandemic situation, the researcher was unable to collect data from a large number of samples.

The scale for PCO was designed using the work of Briscoe et al. (2006), DiRenzo (2010), Gubler (2011), and

the researcher whereas the statements to measure career planning was designed based on the work of Gould (1979) and the rest of the items was developed by the researcher. The measure used for career success was developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990).

A five-point Likert scale was used and the responses range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Positive and negative statements were developed. Therefore, the reverse coding system was adapted. The questionnaire was translated into Tamil language using a back-translation procedure. Therefore, it will support future researchers who target Tamil-speaking employees as a sample for their researches.

Hypotheses Development

PCO and Career Success

The relationship between PCO and career success was sufficiently documented in the literature. At initial, Cao, Hirschi, and Deller (2013); Sultana and Malik (2019); Hall (2004); King (2004); Crant (2004); Briscoe et al. (2006) and Zafar and Mat (2012) and Mustafa, Nor, and Omar (2019) stated that PCO would enhance psychological career success of individuals. DiRenzo (2010); Briscoe et al. (2006); Shanthakumary (2019) identified a positive relationship between PCO and career success. However, Zafar (2017) found an insignificant relationship between PCO and subjective career success. Many other researchers who followed Hall and his associates found that PCO has a positive relationship with subjective career success.

Further, Enache, Simo, Sallan, and Fernández (2008, 2011) examined the relationship between the components of PCO and psychological career success. The results confirmed that self-directed career orientation has a positive impact on career success whereas they found value-driven attitude has a negative impact on psychological career success. Contradictory findings were recorded by Volmer and Spurk(2009). They identified a positive relationship between self-directed career management and career satisfaction and other referent career success. But the relationship between value-driven attitude and the same dependent variables was insignificant.

H₁: There is a positive relationship between PCO and career success.

PCO and Career Planning

DiRenzo (2010) found a positive relationship between PCO and career planning as one of the components of proactive career management behavior. Similar findings were obtained by Orpen (1994); DiRenzo, Greenhaus, and Weer (2015); Rahim and Siti-Rohaida (2015); Shanthakumary (2019), and revealed a positive relationship between both of the variables. Moreover, Herrmann, Hirschi, and Baruch (2015) indicated that the overall score of PCO has a positive relationship with career planning but the value-driven attitude has an insignificant relationship with career planning.

H₂: PCO has a positive relationship with career planning.

Career Planning and Career Success

The relationship between career planning and career success was studied by a limited number of researchers and the connection between them was shown mixed results. DiRenzo (2010); Herrmann, Hirschi, and Baruch (2015); Shanthakumary (2019) found a positive relationship between career planning and career satisfaction.

H₃: There is a positive relationship between career planning and career success.

Mediating role of career planning between PCO and Career Success

The mediating role of career planning between the relationship of PCO and career success is rarely studied by the researchers. Researchers like De Vos and Soens (2008); DiRenzo (2010); Shanthakumary (2019) and others

studied mediating role of career planning as one of the components of proactive career management behaviors or career development and did not separately examine the mediating effect of it. Hence, based on the relationship between PCO and career planning and career success the following hypothesis is stated.

H₄: Career Planning mediates the relationship between PCO and Career success.

Results and Discussion

Among the respondents 51.3 percentage were male and 48.7 percent were female. Their average age was 41.5 years and have an average of 11.13 years of tenure in the present job. The mean of PCO is 3.895 and the standard deviation is 0.5799; the mean of CP is 4.129 and the standard deviation is 0.774. mean of CS is 3.899 and the standard deviation is 0.7217.

Table 1: Construct Reliability and Validity

	Discriminant Validity (Farnell and Larcker)						
	CP	CS	PCO	Cronbach's α	rho_A	CR	AVE
CP	0.828			0.881	0.891	0.915	0.686
CS	0.501	0.798		0.874	0.874	0.897	0.636
PCO	0.462	0.411	0.746	0.942	0.946	0.949	0.557

Source: Analyzed data, 2020

To determine discriminant validity In SMART PLS, two important measures are used. According to Farnell and Larcker (1981) to establish discriminant validity, the values along the diagonal, which are the square root

of AVE(Average Variance Extracted) should be greater than the row correlations on the off-diagonal. In the above table, all the inner correlation values are lower than the diagonal values. On the other hand, HTMT

(Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations) is used in partial least squares structural equation modeling to examine discriminant validity. If discriminant validity does not establish, researchers cannot be sure

about the statistical consistency of the structural path. If the HTMT value is less than 0.9, the model has discriminant validity. The following table shows the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations.

Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT)

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Bias	Confidence Interval 2.5%	Confidence Interval 97.5%
CS -> CP	0.545	0.544	-0.001	0.381	0.689
PCO-> CP	0.497	0.492	-0.005	0.325	0.656
PCO -> CS	0.445	0.443	-0.002	0.269	0.620

Source: Analyzed data, 2020

After performing bootstrapping, HTMT values, bias, and confidence interval at 2.5% and 97.5%. According to the obtained output, HTMT values are <0.9. therefore, the discriminant validity is established.

Testing the Hypotheses

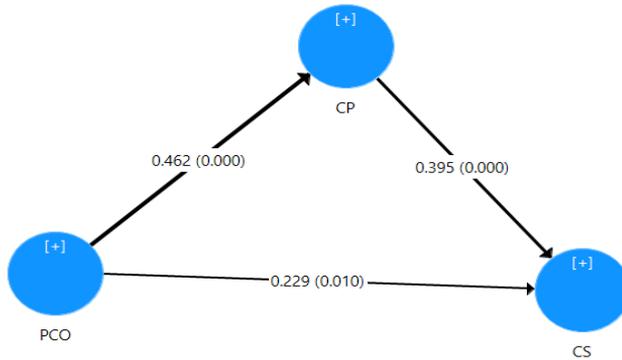


Figure 01: Model with path Coefficients and p-values

Source: Analyzed data, 2020

Table 01: Model-path Coefficients

	Path Coefficient	Mean	Std. De.	T-statistics	P-value
CP -> CS	0.395	0.400	0.075	5.293	0.000
PCO-> CP	0.462	0.472	0.073	6.345	0.000
PCO -> CS	0.229	0.233	0.087	2.631	0.009

The given path coefficients show all the paths are significant and positive. Therefore, H_1 , H_2 , and H_3 are accepted. Further, based on the guidelines given by Baron and Kenny (1986) and Hair et al.'s (2013) the mediation effect is examined. To examine the mediation effect, the path coefficients of PCO -> CS before and the after the mediator are taken into account. The path coefficient before introducing the mediator in the model was 0.409, $p < 0.001$. After the mediator was introduced, it became 0.229, $p < 0.001$. The total indirect effect was 0.183 and it is significant was examined using bootstrapping. It is significant at 0.05 level. However, the strength of the mediation shows that 57% (0.233/0.411) of variance is explained by the mediator and it reflects a partial mediation. Thus, it is concluded that career planning (CP) mediated the relationship between protean career orientation (PCO) and career success (CS). H_4 is accepted.

Conclusion

As mentioned previously, the career orientation of Sri Lankan employees has been changing. It was noted that protean career orientation is present employees in the private sector and public sector in Jaffna district. Employees in HEIs prefer more

autonomy and give high priority to their values. A more transactional-oriented mindset emerged among them. Positive feeling on their career success is important to provide quality service to the students and community. The research findings show the employees in HEIs in Jaffna district have a favorable mindset regarding career success. The region is backward in industrial development and the contribution of the private sector in employment creation is not at desired level. The study identified that protean career orientation influence career success. The mediator role of career planning shows it has a significant influence in determining psychological career success. The employees in the academic side are clear about their career path and unlike non-academics, career progression is in their own hands. The mean value of career planning is highest than other variables in the examined model. It reveals the extent to which employees are aware of the importance of planning a career. Since they control their career destiny, they expect organizational support for career development. They prefer to follow linear progression with the present employer as the job is respected by the society and in comparing with other public sector organizations remuneration is higher in HEIs.

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