

PROTEAN ATTITUDE, CAREER SELF MANAGEMENT AND CAREER SATISFACTION: A NEW FACET OF PERCEIVED EMPLOYABILITY IN RECESSIONARY TIMES

(A Study of Banking Companies in Multan – Pakistan)

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ABSTRACT

Today organizations are enduring through a transmutation phase. The terms like “downsizing”, “flattening”, and “learning organization” describe the profound changes that are occurring worldwide. As the organizations owe their career occupants less than ever, protean attitude (self maneuvering of career direction by an employee instead of leaving it at organization’s pity) has got increased attention of academicians and human resource managers. Career Self Concept and Career Self Management are the toolkits that help an individual in steering its career path. But desire to switch careers is not the same as actually doing it. Career entrenchment and employee’s perceived employability, in wake of current global economic downturn, have strong impacts on career decisions of the individuals. This study aims at evaluating the protean attitude and its relation with career success (career satisfaction and perceived employability) in officer cadre employees of Pakistani Banks. Career self management has been suggested to have a mediating effect. The results support the idea that protean attitude is a significant antecedent of career satisfaction and mediating role of career self management. Another research dimension has been discovered with the anomaly of employees’ perceived employability at the rear of Millennium’s first global economic recession. The implications of these findings, previous studies’ support and future dimensions have been discussed.

Keywords: Protean Attitude, Career Self Management, Career Anchor, Career Entrenchment, Career Self –Concept, Career Success.

Introduction

Protean Career, Boundary less Career and Career Self-Concept, all these terms are used to refer to employees’ self managing attitude towards their career path. The changing organizational paradigms in the wake of technological advancements proposed by 21st century have made organizational careers short sighted and vulnerable. Today, there is a shift in how organizations are designing their contemporary employment contracts with their employees. These contracts are increasingly temporary and tentative in nature offering short term retention and relationship between organization and its member. Many organizations are outsourcing their front line managerial and non managerial positions. In fact, today organizations are enduring through a transmutation phase. The terms like “downsizing”, “flattening”, and “learning organization” describe the profound changes that are occurring worldwide. These modifications in the occupational environment have inferences for career management in the future (Schein, 1996).

Today the organizations owe their career occupants less than ever. As Schein 1996 states it “Organizational position and advancement is increasingly defined in terms of what one knows and what skills one possesses, and is based less and less on seniority or loyalty.” As a reaction, employees of this century feel a heightened need of steering their career themselves. This has led to a relatively new dynamic, *protean attitude*, whereby an employee believes in himself maneuvering the direction of his career instead of leaving it at organization’s pity. As Halls (2003) describes protean career as “..., a career that is driven by the person, not the organization, and that will be reinvented by the person from time to time, as the person and the environment change.” Changes in organizational set up and environment have resulted in less paternal organizations and more self-reliant employees. This is where the role of self- concept comes into play.

Career self concept or, as Schein (1996) used lexicon for it, *career anchor* is the term used to describe an employee’s 1)self-recognized

faculties and abilities, 2) fundamental values, and 3) the developed sense of aims and needs as they relate to the career (Schein, 1996). Research by Schein (1996) has further classified these career anchors into eight categories 1) Autonomy/independence; 2) Security/stability; 3) Technical-functional competence; 4) General Managerial Competence; 5) Entrepreneurial Creativity, 6) Service or Dedication to a Cause; 7) Pure Challenge; and 8) Life Style. In today's tumultuous times, as more and more companies are downsizing and more and more people are getting laid off, these cut-down human resources need to figure out what to do next in their lives. Here the role of their self concepts and career anchors become stronger. When an employee faces changes in its current job conditions, whether it is in form of threat of downsizing or geographical or functional transfer, it discovers one (or more) of above stated eight points as its career anchor(s).

As discussed by McCarthy (2002), in today's circumstances, being proactive is vital for career enhancement. In the research article "Does Having a Proactive Personality Lead to Career Success" McCarthy (2002) states results of the research as "... respondents with proactive personalities were more likely to exhibit innovation ..., demonstrate political acumen in their organizations, and take the initiative to develop their own careers...". This pro-activity is also referred as *career self management* which includes development of new competencies and guidance of career decisions with a strong sense of identity and self values (Vos & Soens, 2008). As Hall (2003) puts it "Pursuing the protean career requires a high level of self-awareness and personal responsibility". This self-awareness is generated by a person's understanding of one's own capabilities and resulting development of skills and acumen needed for making oneself more employable in today's dynamic organizational context. Vos & Soens (2008) suggest that career self management has two components *reflective* (insights employees develop into their own career goals, *where one wants to be*) and *Behavioral*

(behaviors employees instigate with aspire of managing their careers, *what is one doing to get there*).

Desire to switch careers is not the same as actually doing it. Today almost every organization has a remarkable number of its staff members who want to detach their boats from the yacht, but who keep firmly on board, grabbing long-term safety facing extensively prevalent job cuts (Carson and Carson 1997). In their research paper, Carson & Carson (1997) termed it as *career entrenchment*, the tendency to stay in a profession owing to investments, psychological protection, and sensitivity that there are few career prospects. Many employees continue in their institutes because departing would result in forgoing salary rises, paid vacations, and retirement benefits. As organizational residence increases, these economic "side bets" accumulate (Carson & Carson, 1997). Another dimension of actually not quitting a current job in hand is owing to widespread economic recession and resulting unemployment in almost all over the globe. Hence, employees' perceived *employability* has been adversely affected in recent recessionary times. Devoid of refuting its inspiring value for those who want to improve their lot through pluck and hard work, it is difficult to imagine the protean career as the roadmap for anyone other than well-read elite or a lucky few (Kuchinke & Park, 2012). As Kegan (1994) states that although regular research is not on hand, approximations are that less than one half of adults get to the level of psychological development necessary for protean attitude, and this ratio is sure to reduce if economic, institutional, social, and political obstacles are considered (Kuchinke & Park, 2012). Therefore, the variable of today's employees' perceived employability stands alien to the traditional model of protean attitude and career success. As Kuchinke & Park (2012) have described this phenomenon:

"... much of the literature ... portrays the self-directed career as a near universal recipe for alternative career progression and success. Empirical

studies, however, show quite consistently, that self-directed careers continue to be the exception rather than the rule, and that self-directed career behavior requires personal, educational, social, and material resources available to only to a minority. Moreover, in an era of high unemployment, self-directed career behavior may be selected as a last resort, a bridge between employments, and thus for many constitute not the highly desirable work pattern portrayed in the literature but a stopgap measure. Finally, there is a dire need to examine self-directed career behavior in cross-cultural settings. With the majority of the literature developed by North American scholars, the question over its cross-cultural validity, relevance, and feasibility in other societies and cultures arises.”

Pakistani Economy and Employment Context

Pakistan is situated in South East of Asia. After demise of 9/11, the country has been famed in global news high lights for its geo-political significance and internal and external victimization of terrorist chaos. Pakistan is a developing country and is facing many internal and external problems. Power failure, adverse law and order conditions, and political instability have made domestic business conditions hostile. High inflation and limited wage growth have drawn more females into the workforce to earn for their families, despite of cultural confrontation over the issue (Wikipedia, 2014). Global recession of 2008 also hit the economy, and a resultant rise in unemployment is still prevalent. Pakistan has the 9th largest labour force in the world. *The Global Employment Trends* report issued by the International Labour Organization (ILO) forecasted that Pakistan’s unemployment rate, 5.17% in 2013, is set to slightly augment in year 2014 to 5.29%. The rate is projected to remain almost constant for next few years owing to the political unrest plaguing the country. The report has also

stated that with the fifth year of global downturn, growth across the world lost pace and unemployment set up to increase again, leaving an accumulated total of almost 197 million employable people unemployed in 2012. Another hostile measure taken over the globe generally, and in Pakistan particularly is downsizing of various public and private institutions. The situation has created insecurity for those who are already on job. Further, many organizations today outsource various activities. Outsourcing generates fear of job losses in employees, since there is less expense made on the outsourced employees as they are usually not provided with any payment for retirement plans and other facilities. “Pakistan has developed into the 20th most gorgeous outsourcing goal” (Ahmad et al., 2012). The added misery is the stagnant economy of the country due to which career retention is has become a challenge as companies are laying-off employees to cut costs and remain competitive in recessionary periods. In these fiscal and economical conditions in view, job switching and career shifting is not very smooth in Pakistan.

Having stated this all, there is a lack of any study to evaluate protean attitude and related career satisfaction in current recessionary economic context of the country. Our study aims to bridge this gap. This research aimed to investigate if protean attitude is directly to career success of banking employees in Pakistan. A mediating role of Career Self Management has also been evaluated. And finally employees’ employability and career satisfaction have been separately evaluated as two integral parts of Career Success. The research has been conducted in early 2014, when economy of Pakistan and employment situation in banks is not promising. Our model is based on the model developed by De Vos & Soens (2008) for their research article

“Protean attitude and career success: The mediating role of self management”.

Model



Hypothesis 1: A Protean attitude relates positively to career self management behavior.

Hypothesis 2a: There is positive relationship between career self management and career satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2b: There is positive relationship between career self management and perceived employability.

Method

Two Pakistani banks have been selected as samples namely United Bank Limited (a private bank) and The Bank of Punjab (a public sector bank). Sampling is purposive in nature as sample was a combination of both public and private sector banks. Employees of both banks’ Multan city branches were sent questionnaires. 132 employees at officer cadre were sent with questionnaires. We received 72 completed surveys. Of the valid responses received, 22.2% (N=16) were female. Moreover, 40.3% of participants were aged between 28-34 years of age. Experience of 43.3% participants was in the range of 6-10 years.

Measures

The following measures were used in assessing the constructs of interest in this study. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

Protean Attitude:

Respondents' protean were measured using the three items developed by Hall (2002). Sample items included, “I navigate my own career, according to my plans” and “I take responsibility for my own development.”

Career Self Management:

The degree to which respondents intended to steer their careers was measured using the five

behaviorally oriented items adapted from Struges et al. (2002) career self management questionnaire. The sample items used in the current study were “I keep my CV updated” and “I keep my boss aware of my accomplishments.”

Employability:

The degree to which respondents perceive themselves employable outside of their current organization was measured using three items from developed by E by et al. (2003) & A. De Vos et al (2008). Sample items included, “I believe I could easily obtain a comparable job with another employer” and “I believe I could easily obtain another job that is in line with my level of education and experience.”

Career Satisfaction:

The extent to which respondents engaged were satisfied with their career achievements was measured using the four items developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990). Sample items included, “I am satisfied with the success I have (so far) achieved in my career” and “I am satisfied with the progress I have (so far) meeting my goals for income.”

Analysis:

Variable means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation coefficients among the study variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1- Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
CS*	3.7431	.56446	72
Protean	4.0463	.51368	72
CSM**	3.8250	.64037	72
Employability	3.6528	.71083	72

*CS= Career Satisfaction

**CSM=Career Self management

Correlations among the study variables were strong, with the highest (0.310) between Protean Attitude and Career Self Management and between (0.272) between Protean Attitude and Career Success. But there is weakest correlation (0.100) between Protean Attitude and Employability; and between Career Satisfaction and Employability (0.126).

Significance (1-tailed) correlations also depict the same. A linear regression analysis was carried out to find out the significant effect of

protean attitude and career satisfaction, while keeping the mediating variable of career self management.

Table2- Correlations

		Career Satisfaction	Protean Attitude	Career Self Management	Employability
Pearson Correlation	CS*	1.000	.272	.283	.126
	Protean	.272	1.000	.310	.100
	CSM**	.283	.310	1.000	.238
	Employability	.126	.100	.238	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	CS*	.	.010	.008	.147
	Protean	.010	.	.004	.201
	CSM**	.008	.004	.	.022
	Employability	.147	.201	.022	.
N	CS*	72	72	72	72
	Protean	72	72	72	72
	CSM**	72	72	72	72
	Employability	72	72	72	72

*CS= Career Satisfaction **CSM=Career Self management

Table 3- Linear Regression

Model Summary^b

Model	R	ΔR2	Adjusted ΔR2	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					ΔR2 Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.272 _a	.074	.061	.54699	.074	5.608	1	70	.021	2.247

a. Predictors: (Constant), Protean

b. Dependent Variable: Career Satisfaction

Excluded Variables^b

Model	Beta In	T	Sig. (P-value)	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics		
					Tolerance	VIF	Minimum Tolerance
1 CSM	.220 ^a	1.846	.069	.217	.904	1.107	.904
Employability	.099 ^a	.857	.395	.103	.990	1.010	.990

a. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Protean

b. Dependent Variable: CS

ANOVA^b

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1.678	1	1.678	5.608	.021 ^a
Residual	20.944	70	.299		
Total	22.622	71			

a. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Protean

b. Dependent Variable: CS

Results

Adjusted ΔR^2 depicts the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables or R-square adjusted for number of independent variables. In our analysis value of R-square is (0.74). This depicts a remarkable relationship between protean attitude (IV) and career satisfaction (DV). The regression analysis represents stronger relation of Career Self Management (CSM) and the dependent variable Career Satisfaction. The higher the CSM the higher will be Career Success. *P-value* for relationship of protean attitude and career satisfaction (0.21) provides us 95% confidence in the value of the estimated coefficient. But *P-value* is insignificant between Employability and Career Success. A large proportion of participants who were high in protean attitude, marked low in perceived employability. This is because of limited job prospects in lieu of current national economic situation and cut-throat competition in domestic banking industry. Beta value of employability also reinforces this insignificant relationship between protean attitude, perceived employability and career satisfaction.

Conclusion

The findings of study reveal that individuals, working in officer cadre of banking companies in Pakistan, with a protean career attitude report higher level of career satisfaction, and that the relationship is mediated by the development of career self management. Employees perceived

employability was found to be low due to inhospitable business circumstances and reduced confidence of employees in their ability to find a better place according to their career planning and objectives. This contrasts with the previous researches. Our results suggest that the extent to which individuals are proactive in managing their careers does not automatically entail stronger feelings of career satisfaction or employability. The possible explanation of this is found with what Kuchinke & Park (2012) stated:

“The self-directed career literature was developed in an era of economic expansion and optimism about the promise of alternative work arrangements, including entrepreneurial opportunities, intra-preneurship, continuing education and training provisions for new or additional work qualifications, and the feasibility of moving in and out of the labor market without penalty or costs to one’s career. The current era appears to be characterized by retrenchment, diminishing opportunities for retraining, uncertainty over the reliable labor market information, and an abundance of un-employed or under-employed individuals vying for a small number of job openings. Thus the question arises to what the degree the current economic situation is supportive of self-directed careers”.

Although our study addressed the impact of protean attitude in a very specific sample, the results support the idea that having a protean attitude is important for the individuals in current career landscape. This, at its minimum, helps individuals to face the

difficulties in career mobility both in physical and psychological terms. The famous statement of Hall (2002) “The career is dead; Long live the career”, still holds right; but as the clouds of economic slump are still

roaming around there is a need to reevaluate the success of protean attitude in making an individual more employable in these circumstances.

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