



PROTEAN AND BOUNDARYLESS CAREER ORIENTATION ATTITUDES

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Abstract

The present contemporary unstable business environment is challenging the concept of the Traditional career in an enterprise or organization, in the favor of a protean career attitude (PCA) in which individuals are characterized as having a strong sense of identity and personal values that guide their career planning and decisions. The Empirical research has provided limited evidence on its antecedents and outcomes as regards individuals who are at an early stage of their career path. The purpose of this study is to shed light on the behavioral antecedents of protean career orientation (PCO) and to investigate the relationship between PCO and the individuals' employability in the society.

Key Words: *Protean, Career, Concept.*

Introduction

Work is a central for people's self-concept and career success is an important for individuals as well as for organizations. Substantial changes in today's work environment such as rapid technological advancements, flattened hierarchies, and decreased job stability due to financial meltdowns have diminished individuals' opportunities to pursue a career within one single organization during their lifetime with prescheduled linear upward moves over time.

It is concerned here with two key role concepts within this career perspective plan a) the protean career attitude and b) the boundaryless career attitude.

A protean career attitude (PCA) has been characterized as involving a broader perspective, a developmental progression, and viewing a career as a calling and a way to self-fulfillment.

A person with a boundaryless career attitude (PBCA) is characterized by high mobility and prefers to navigate physically and/or psychologically across many organizations.

Both protean and boundaryless career attitudes have two components. The protean career attitude consists of a values-driven attitude and self-directed career management, the boundaryless career attitude is composed of an organizational mobility preference and a boundaryless mindset.

Earlier studies have predominantly focused on methodological aspects such as the exploration of different types of career orientations. Only some parts of the career attitude constructs have been used so far to predict career success and planning. However, as the constructs have been developed as being independent but related, it makes sense to include both career attitudes into one analysis to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the similarities and differences of protean and boundaryless career attitudes and their relationships with career success.

1. Career success

Career success defined as “positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievements one has accumulated as a result of one's work experiences” implies both subjective success and objective

success. Subjective success is an individual's positive evaluation of the career. Indicators of subjective career success are, for example, career satisfaction and job satisfaction. Indicators of objective success are, for example, salary and promotions. Meta-analytical research reveals that correlations between subjective and objective success are not higher. Therefore, it is important to consider both subjective and objective career success.

2. Protean and boundaryless career attitudes

Protean and boundaryless career attitudes is important to state that these constructs describe career attitudes, not vocational behavior. Protean and boundaryless career attitudes can be considered to be key drivers that can indirectly affect career outcomes via actual behavior. For example, placing a high value on protean career attitude might result in higher goal-setting and a greater investment of effort because one feels responsible for one's career and wants to act according to one's own values and aspirations.

a. Protean career attitude

The protean career concept was introduced by Hall (1976, 2002) as a reaction to changing career pathways that contained more freedom and growth as well as self-determination for individuals. The protean career is defined “as a career in which the person is 1) values-driven in the sense that the person's internal values provide the guidance and measure of success for individual's career; and 2) self-directed in personal career management – having the ability to be adaptive in terms of performance and learning demands”. People with a protean career attitude are values-driven as they shape their career according to their own internal values and beliefs in contrast to, for example, organizational values and beliefs, and they are self-directed as they pursue their careers based on personally defined career goals. People with a protean career attitude use their personal identity as a guide for career decisions.

b. Boundaryless career attitude

A person with a boundaryless mindset, “navigates the changing work landscape by enacting a career characterized by different levels of physical and psychological movement”. The boundaryless career attitude refers to organizational mobility preference and a boundaryless mindset. Organizational mobility preference means an attitude to conduct actual moves between different occupations, jobs, and organizations. People with a high organizational mobility preference choose to work in several different organizations and actually cross organizational boundaries by taking employment in another company. In contrast, a boundaryless mindset refers to an individual's mental ability to be mobile. A person with a boundaryless mindset enjoys working on projects with people across many organizations and feels energized and enthusiastic about engaging in new experiences and situations outside of the organization.

Review of the Literature

Nowadays, employment conditions are volatile and turbulent and create a high level of ambiguity regarding career paths and expectations. In order to deal with this ambiguity, careers have become increasingly directed by the individual rather than by the organization, and are affected by intrinsic values rather than extrinsic motivations. Hall (1976) was the first to describe this new approach as protean career orientation (PCO): an individual attitude in which career choices are personal and underlie the search for self-fulfillment. In contrast to traditional careers based on upward mobility, salary increases and responsibilities across a few organizations, a protean career is conceived as being *self-directed* (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Despite the fact that the concept of the protean career was introduced in the 1970s, scholars have highlighted the scarcity of empirical research on the topic (Gubler, Arnold, & Coombs, 2014). Specifically, they have underlined the need for the issues regarding

the antecedents and outcomes of a protean career orientation to be better addressed. These contributions have highlighted the role in PCO played by factors related to the individual, encompassing abilities related to self- and relationship-management.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyzes antecedents of PCO and its competencies related to the ability to set learning goals and to persist and maintain a positive outlook in pursuing the goals.
2. To investigate the behavioral competencies that enable individuals to understand and influence the environment effectively.
3. To make suggestions to understand the antecedents and outcomes of protean career and boundaryless career orientation.

Discussion, Results and Implications:

a. Present research

In the present research study they will try to theoretically integrate two lines of research and to empirically test whether protean and boundaryless career attitudes are associated with subjective and objective career success. However, research on mobility as well as on predictors of career success suggests that it may be promising to predict objective career success by protean and boundaryless career attitudes.

b. Results

The fit indices of the first model were quite poor. Confirmatory Factor Analysis on the PCO scale showed poor fitting for a one-factor model. The inadequacy of this measurement model revealed that a formative model, rather than a reflective one, better applies to this construct. In reflective models, indicators are interchangeable reflections of an underlying construct, while in formative models indicators.

c. Theoretical implications

- i. It is found that to make a number of contributions both to the competency-based field, by analyzing the relevant outcomes of the deployment of behavioral competencies, and to the career management field, by exploring the role of behavioral competencies as antecedents of a protean career orientation. Moreover, we have advanced the research on protean careers
- ii. It is found that the self-directed, values-driven, and psychological mobility constructs are all substantially inter correlated and related to proactivity-related traits and self-efficacy. These career orientations show substantial predictive power for career satisfaction and self-management behaviors and incremental validity over proactivity and self-efficacy. Importantly, organizational mobility preferences are tangentially related to other PBCO and show a divergent nomological net; they are a distinct construct.
- iii. It is found that the address critical questions about protean and boundaryless career orientations' structure, impact on career outcomes, and connections with other individual drivers of career behavior and success. Results have implications for future career research and theory in each of these areas.
- iv. It is found that relations among career orientation components do not support protean and boundaryless orientations as traditionally modeled and assessed. Self-directed, values-driven, and psychological mobility share a substantial general factor and have similar patterns of criterion and personality trait relations.



- v. It is found that the weak relations between proactive career orientations and mobility preferences and behavior indicate that the benefits of increasing career proactivity are not limited to clients interested in frequent job hopping or to those whose organizations do not support their career advancement.

Suggestions

1. It is suggested that the strong relations of proactive career orientations to adaptive career behaviors and satisfaction suggest that career counseling clients can benefit from interventions to enhance career proactively.
2. It is suggested that the guided support for adopting self-directed career behaviors is likely to be particularly beneficial for clients low on proactively and self-efficacy traits, who will be less predisposed to independently adopt such orientations.
3. It is suggested that the organizational career support suggest that one way individuals proactively manage their careers is by eliciting career resources from their employers. Working with clients to specify their goals and identify career resources is a critical way counselors can promote career adaptation and satisfaction.

Conclusion

The protean and boundaryless career concepts have inspired much research on modern career development. This study has shown that orientations toward these career forms offer unique insight for understanding individuals' career-specific behaviors and attitudes, but also that much of their predictive power is shared with broad personality traits. It is concluded that the current study examined the association between behavioral competencies and protean career orientation, and the positive outcomes of protean career orientation in terms of employability.

Scope for further Research

The study findings build on previous research, and empirically support the importance of adaptability and self-awareness as key competencies in predicting a protean career orientation.

Future research on PBCO will benefit by better connecting with other models of individual determinants of career behavior. Based on systematic analyses of criterion and construct relations, we propose a new integrative perspective positioning PBCO as one intermediary mechanism through which basic personality tendencies influence career behavior in contemporary organizations. It is believed that our understanding of personality traits can inform our thinking about PBCO, and vice versa. Organizational research often suffers from balkanization of fields, even when they address the same phenomena. Integrating diverse perspectives on drivers of career success can provide new insights and promote a more cohesive and cumulative science of careers.

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