

An investigation of Career Anchors Model among Education Organization, Physical Education organization and higher education Employees in Iran

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of the present study was to investigate career anchors, that is, Technical/Functional, Service/Dedication, Autonomy, Identity, Pure challenge/Variety, General managerial competence, Security, and Creativity anchors, preferred by the academic employees (MAs and PHDs) working for the three organizations of Education Organization, Physical Education Organization, and Higher Education (MSRT). It was meant to discover the kind of anchors preferred for job promotion and possible reasons as well. Four provinces, i.e. Guilan, Tehran, Lorestan, and Isfahan, were selected based on geographical considerations. DeLong (1982)'s standardized questionnaire was used for data collection. Friedman and Kruskal walis tests were used for data analysis. Results indicated that among all career anchors, Service/Dedication, Autonomy, and Technical/Functional anchors were mostly preferred by the employees to reach their professional goals. However, Security, Identity, and Creativity were the least effective anchors used by the participants. It seems that interpersonal relationships connected to anchors play an important role in job promotion. In addition, Creativity anchor was one of the least favorite perhaps because people are not provided with needed opportunities to indicate their innovations so prefer to try other anchors.

Keywords: Career anchors, education organization, physical education organization, higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Although for many people the term career anchor is synonymous to job promotion, it seems not to be as simple as that, because career anchor model is a prolonged process through which one can learn about himself, his job, and his organization. Career anchors could be described as forming part of our internal career. They provide a mechanism for understanding an individual's self-perceived talents, values and motives (Steele, 2009). According to (Schein, 1990) a person has some plans and strategies in order to reach his career goals and these goals are revised from time to time during his/her occupational career. It has been suggested that it can take up to ten years of working before a person discovers their primary career anchor (Schein, 1978). (Schein, 1993) defines career anchors as the set of self-perceptions related to talents and skills, motives, needs, attitudes and values that people have towards the work they develop or seek to develop.

(Schein, 1975) believes that the career orientations, which is an important element of an employee's internal career, can have important implications for their job satisfaction, commitment and retention within organizations. A career anchor refers to a cluster of self-perceived needs, values, and talents that give shape to an employee's career decisions. It can be thought of as a central component of the self-concept that an employee is willing to relinquish, even if forced to make a difficult choice (Akhtar, 2011).

The career anchor model evolved from Schein's longitudinal research on a group of 44, all male, alumni from a master's program at the Sloan school of management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The original

aim of this research was to improve the understanding of managerial career development (Schein, 1993). Schein and Delong (1982a), have categorized career anchors into different groups. We adhere to (Schein, 1987)'s definition of the eight anchors. DeLong's questionnaire has also been used for the purpose of data collection. A brief definition for each category of career anchor is presented here based on what Schein has identified:

Functional Expertise: Primarily excited by the content of the work itself; prefers advancement only in his/her technical or functional area of competence; generally disdains and fears general management as too political. **General Management:** Primarily excited by the opportunity to analyze and solve problems under conditions of incomplete information and uncertainty; likes harnessing people together to achieve common goals; stimulated (rather than exhausted) by crisis situations. **Security:** Primarily motivated by job security and long-term attachment to an organization; willing to conform and to be fully socialized into an organization's values and norms; tends to dislike travel and relocation. **Creativity:** Primarily motivated by the need to build or create something that is entirely their own project; easily bored and likes to move from project to project; more interested in initiating new enterprises than in managing established ones. **Autonomy:** Primarily motivated to seek work situations which are maximally free of organizational constraints; wants to set own schedule and pace of work; is willing to trade off opportunities for promotion to have more freedom. **Sense of Service:** Primarily motivated to improve the world in some fashion; wants to align work activities with personal values about helping society; more concerned with finding jobs which meet their values than their skills. **Pure Challenge:** Primarily motivated to overcome major obstacles, solve almost unsolvable problems, or win out over extremely tough opponents; define their careers in terms of daily combat or competition in which winning is everything; very single minded and intolerant of those without comparable success.

Lifestyle: Primarily motivated to balance career with lifestyle; highly concerned with such issues as paternity/maternity leave, day care options etc. Looks for organizations that have strong pro- family values and programs.

Career anchors have been under investigation by scholars and with different groups and organizations. Some studies have aimed at discovering which career anchors are considered to more important than others among different professionals. Furthermore, studies have indicated that individuals' career anchors are different among different subjects. (Kaplan et al., 2009) outlined salient career anchors in nursing based on their importance as life style, managerial competence, and service and dedication. (Weber and Ladkin, 2009) reported that life style, among other careers, can be considered industry's specialists. On the other hand, (Dumitrescu, 2009) determined salient career anchor of engineers as independence and autonomy and life style.

There are also different attitudes toward career anchors. For instance, as (Campbell, 1987) claims, the pure challenge anchor, illustrates the general contention about the 'winning' attitude of executives; that is, they value competition and challenge as essential ingredients of success. These characteristics are especially true among executives whose career success orientations are getting ahead, getting free, and getting high (Derr, 1986a; Derr, 1986b). Simply put, they are success-oriented executives (Rogers, 1987).

In this study attempts have been made to compare the attitudes toward the career anchors mentioned among the employees of three of the governmental organizations in I.R. Iran, that is Education Organization (EO), Physical Education Organization (PEO), and Ministry of Science, Research, and technology (MSRT)/Higher education. Therefore the main objective of the study is to compare career anchors among academic staff (MAs and above) in the three organizations mentioned above. There are of course some other minor objectives as follows:

1. To investigate the Education Organization staff's preference with regard to each career anchor separately.
2. To investigate the Physical education Organization staff's preference with regard to each career anchor separately.

To investigate Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology staff's preference with regard to each career anchor separately.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The population of the study included MAs and PhDs working at the three organizations mentioned namely Iranian Education Organization, Physical Education Organization, and Ministry of Science Research and Technology. Considering the geographical factors, four provinces, i.e., Lorestan, Guilan, Tehran, and Isfahan were selected using clustering technique. From among 230 MAs working there, 144 people were randomly selected as the sample of the population using Morgan Sampling table.

Instruments

The questionnaire used in this study to collect the needed data was the one which was developed and used by (Delong, 1982) to measure the eight career anchors including Technical/Functional, Service/Dedication, Autonomy, Identity, Pure challenge/Variety, General managerial competence, Security, and Creativity anchors. The questionnaire includes 44 items and each item, in turn, has 4 choices namely, “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “agree”, and “strongly agree”. It has been used widely by researchers in order to assess career anchors. Furthermore, the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated by researchers including (Delong, 1982), the developer, who were using it and it enjoyed a high degree of reliability. In this study, too, Cronbach’s Alpha was used in order to check whether the test results would be consistent. It was proved to be 0.80 which is a high reliability.

Data collection

The questionnaires were administered by the researchers to the subjects of the study in their workplace in November, 2012. Participants were briefed about the purpose and nature of the study beforehand. They were asked to right what was true about them in their career with regard to the eight categories of career anchors. Their anonymity was also guaranteed so that they could complete the questionnaires more confidently. 144 people filled the questionnaires out. However, 43 questionnaires were discarded because they had not been worked on as requested so 101 questionnaires were used for data analysis procedure. SPSS version 20 was used for data summarizing and analysis.

Analysis procedure

The design of the study was *ex post facto* since the researchers are comparing what has happened to the participants in the past. Its descriptive nature implied its being an applied study. The questionnaire uses a 4-point Likert-type scale. The score for the item “strongly disagree” was 1, “disagree”, 2 “agree, 3 and “strongly agree, 4, respectively. As for the first five groups of anchors i.e. Technical/Functional, Service/Dedication, Autonomy, Pure challenge/Variety, and General managerial competence, there were 6 questions for each category so the least and most points for these anchors were 6 and 24, respectively. Therefore, the points above 15 were considered above the average. Identity, and Security included 5 questions each so the least and most points were 5 and 20, respectively. As such, the points above 12.5 were considered above average. Finally, Creativity contains 4 questions meaning that the least and most points are 4 and 16, respectively, implying that the points above 10 were considered as above the average.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the necessary data were collected, they were subjected to descriptive statistics. Then, to be able to draw sound conclusions, inferential statistics was utilized. The data set was non-parametric, and the results are summarized in Table 1 based on Friedman and Kruscal walis test.

Table 1. Kruscal walis test results for eight career anchors

	N	Technical/ Functional			Service/ Dedication			Autonomy			Identity		
		MR	Z	Sig.	MR	Z	Sig.	MR	Z	Sig.	MR	Z	Sig.
EO	37	51.22			55.14	1.53	0.46	52.50	3.69	0.15	49.53	0.48	0.78
PEO	42	52.70	0.49	0.78	50.14			55.07			50.32		
MSRT	22	47.39			45.66			40.70			54.77		
	N	Variety			General managerial			Security			Creativity		
		MR	Z	Sig.	MR	Z	Sig.	MR	Z	Sig.	MR	Z	Sig.
EO	37	47.85			47.73			48.35			47.91	1.76	0.41
PEO	42	50.80	1.28	0.52	53.83	0.86	0.64	51.65	0.60	0.74	55.51		
MSRT	22	56.68			51.09			54.20			47.59		

EO: Education Organization; PEO: Physical Education organization; MSRT: Ministry of science, research, and technology

Based on the results obtained from the data, Service/Dedication and Technical/Functional Competence anchors are the most important ones on which the personnel of the three organizations depend in order to promote. This finding is in line with the results of the studied conducted by (Igbaria, 1991 and Baroudi, 1988) who discovered that Technical/Functional Competence and Service/Dedication are the most important anchors.

However it is in contrast with what (Samner et al., 2005) found which indicated that Creativity was the most effective career anchor. The conclusion drawn from the results is that, with regard to the definitions of Service/Dedication anchor, people in the above-mentioned organizations try to promote in the workplace by relying on having an effective relationships with others. The staff preferred to use their personal abilities and their independence effectively in order to reach the higher positions in these organizations. On the other hand, the three career anchors namely Identity, Security, and Creativity, proved to be the least in their importance for job promotion among the subjects. In spite of the fact that a course such as Physical Education can provide the staff with opportunities to be creative at work, it seems that these people may not find enough chances to reveal their capabilities and personal creativity. That is why they rely more on other anchors such as Service and Independence to promote. Security and Identity suffer the same problem and do not lead to promotion as other anchors may do. With regard to Security, it seems that people are not sure of the kind of Security their job may give them. In other words, job security is still a worry for the personnel so they feel they cannot promote using this anchor hence they prefer to try others, instead. The problem with Identity, being among the least noticed anchors, is that Physical Education majors feel themselves alienated in other organizations. In other words, they think they cannot assert themselves in the organizations where their job seems not to be directly related to the organization they are working for. Most managers think that a person with a degree in Physical Education is only able to 'teach' rather than do other creative jobs. So we expect to find these people in classes whereas they are capable of doing out-of-class jobs equally effective. For instance, the role of Physical Education cannot be ignored in building a healthy society.

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