Role of Career Anchors for Innovative Behaviors at Workplace

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Abstract: The organizations of today are undergoing a metamorphosis. Whether one thinks of it as downsizing, rightsizing, flattening, becoming a learning organization, or simply as transformations into something as yet unknown, no one would challenge that profound changes are occurring worldwide. These changes in the occupational environment have implications for career development in the future. Will there ever be such a concept as an organizational career or will careers become a more fragmented set of jobs held together far more by what has been labeled as “internal career”. The concept of internal career here means the subjective sense of where one is going in one’s work life, in contrast with the “external career,” the formal stages and roles that are defined by organizational policies and societal concepts of what an individual can expect in the occupational structure. The concept of Career Anchors which includes Autonomy/Independence, Security/Stability, Technical/functional competence, General managerial competence, Entrepreneurial creativity, Service/Dedication to a cause, Pure Challenge and Lifestyle becomes more vital in today’s turbulent world as more people are laid off in the frenzy of down-sizing and have to figure out what to do next in their lives. Based on this review the second part of this study deals with a set of testable prepositions developed to explore the relation of gender, type of industry and experience of Pakistani manager’s knowledge levels on Career Anchors. Most of the previous work on Career Anchors has been done in the western settings. The present study addresses this gap by proposing the middle managers belonging to the banking, health, telecom and education sector of Pakistan to become the respondents for the empirical investigation of this research.

Key words: Career Anchors • Type of industry • Managers Gender

INTRODUCTION

In today’s highly competitive global business environment, organizations are revitalizing their workplace strategies for their long-term survival. No one can doubt the fact that profound changes are occuring worldwide, whether its is downsizing, rightsizing, flattening or becoming a learning organization. These changes in the occupational environment have implications for career development in the future. Will there even be such a concept as an “organizational career” or will careers become a more fragmented set of jobs held together far more by what has been labelled as the “internal career”.

The concept of internal career is the subjective sense of where one is going in one’s work life, as contrast with the “external career” the formal stages and roles that are defined by organizational policies and societal concepts of what an individual can expect in the occupational structure [1, 2]. In studying careers longitudinally it became evident that most people form a strong self-concept which holds there internal career together even as they experience dramatic changes in their external career. This self-concept according to Schein1978, is called a “career anchor” and understanding of it would help to illuminate how people made career choices. The concept of career anchor becomes especially applicable in today’s turbulent world as more and more people are laid off in the frenzy of down-sizing and are having to figure out what to do next in their lives. In order to survive in this era of hyper competition, organisations need innovative and creative people who understand how to apply problem-based learning using out-of-the-box approaches. Besides leaders should play a vital role to inspire and influence employees to achieve a shared vision in cultivating innovative behavior and clear career orientations for their long term survival in the organisations. In short the first part of this article highlights the importance of career anchors and leadership traits that are vital in shaping mangers.
behavior to compete in the challenging competitive environment and in the second part a set of testable prepositions are developed to explore the relation of gender, type of industry and experience of Pakistani manager’s knowledge levels on Career Anchors.

**Literature Review:** The career orientations of employee can have important implications for their job satisfaction, commitment and retention within organizations. An important element of an employee’s internal career is the career anchor or career orientation [1, 11]. 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.

Career anchors only evolve as one gains occupational and life experience. However, once the self-concept has been formed, it functions as a stabilizing force, hence the metaphor of “anchor,” is used. Most of us are not aware of our career anchors until we are forced to make choices pertaining to self-development, family, or career. Yet it is important to become aware of our anchors so we can choose wisely when choices have to be made. Schein [12] has identified eight career anchors that guide an employee’s career decisions: (1) security/stability; (2) autonomy/independence; (3) managerial competence; (4) technical or functional competence; (5) entrepreneurial creativity; (6) sense of service/dedication; (7) pure challenge; and (8) lifestyle integration.

Participants who analyze their career anchors still find the exercise meaningful and consider it very important to compete, but there has been a marked shift in what they identify their anchors to be. The results reported below are of necessity somewhat impressionistic but they allow one to examine each anchor category and report both what changes have already become visible and what changes might be anticipated as we look ahead to the 21st century. We begin with those anchor categories that have shown the most dramatic shifts in structure and content.

**Security/Stability:** Individuals anchored in security/stability experience the most severe problems because of the shift in organizational policies from guaranteeing "employment security" to touting "employability security." This shift implies that the only thing the career occupant can really expect of an organization is the opportunity to learn and gain experience, which presumably makes him or her more employable in some other organization. What this means internally to the career occupant is that the base of security and stability has to shift from dependence on an organization to dependence on oneself.

Self-reliance and self-management are becoming dominant requirements for future career management. Therefore, individuals who oriented themselves initially to finding a good employer and staying with that employer for the duration of their careers have to develop a new way of thinking about themselves and locate new external or internal structures on which to become dependent. It is not at all clear where the security anchored person of today can find his or her niche.

**Autonomy/Independence:** Individuals anchored in autonomy find the occupational world an easier place to navigate. The autonomy anchor is aligned, at least for the present, with most organizational policies of promising only employability. The self-reliance that may be needed in the future is already part of the psychological make-up of this group of people. They may well become the role models for future career incumbents. In tracking our various populations it is also evident that for many people, as they age, their autonomy needs increase, leading to fantasies of opening up their own businesses, becoming a consultant, working part-time and, in other ways, reducing their dependency on any particular organization or job.

What is not clear is whether the ability to be autonomous depends upon a baseline of security that we take for granted. The retiree with a good pension can afford to think creatively about next career steps, but the laid off mid-life worker or manager without adequate life savings or a well endowed retirement program may continue to seek secure positions even though his or her anchor is autonomy. The members of this group who have already built autonomous careers will be well adapted to the future, but those who have depended upon secure jobs while planning to break out may be highly vulnerable to the current restructuring of the labor market even though their anchor is in line with future options.

**Life Style:** It is this anchor which has shown the most change since the original research of the 1960's and 1970's. In the original research the security anchor was broken into two components: economic security and/or geographic stability. Most people in this anchor group thought of economic security but a few talked of stabilizing their life pattern by settling into a given region and refusing to be moved by their company every
few years. In the various follow up studies done in the 1970's it became evident that these two components were really different anchors. There were still those who defined their career in terms of economic security. But there was a growing number who were in dual career situations and who therefore defined their career as being part of a larger "life system." They had to integrate two careers and two sets of personal and family concerns into a coherent overall pattern, best described as a particular life style. The trend toward autonomy and life style as anchors is, of course, a healthy development given the way the world is going. As noted above, the occupational structure is increasingly moving toward a different concept of the employment contract in which organizations owe their career occupants less and less. Organizational position and advancement is increasingly defined in terms of what one knows and what skills one possesses and based less and less on seniority or loyalty. But knowledge workers are also more mobile and able to be autonomous. To retain their best employee’s organizations must therefore be able to challenge them and meet their needs. No longer is it desirable or feasible to use golden handcuffs or promises of life time security. Both the organization and the individual are gradually getting adjusted to the notion that they have to look out for themselves, which means that organizations will become less paternalistic and individuals will become more self-reliant. To the extent that more and more individuals will be in dual career situations, they will think, plan and act more as a social unit and organizations will have to consider how to maintain support systems for such units in the form of child care, job sharing opportunities, part-time work, sabbaticals and other adaptive modifications of the traditional 9 to 5 job. Even the way work is defined will gradually change as the boundaries between jobs, between organizations and between work and family become more fluid and ambiguous [13].

**Technical/Functional Competence:** This group is gradually becoming aware of the increasing importance of knowledge and skill but is confused because it is not entirely acceptable in today's world to settle for that as one's publicly announced anchor. Hence most of the people who will admit privately that they enjoy being "somebody" because their competence is valued, nevertheless espouse publicly that they want to get into management and "climb the ladder" because that is where the big rewards are perceived to be. At the same time this group is of necessity also worried because knowledge and skill become rapidly obsolete in a dynamically changing technological world and it is not clear who will guarantee continued education and retraining.

The world will always need craftsmen and experts in specific functions and, as technological complexity increases, the need for technical experts will increase. But, as technologies in all the functions themselves change more and more rapidly, experts will become obsolete more and more rapidly. In other words, to remain technically/functionally competent will require constant updating and relearning in an organizational world that will not bear the costs in terms of money and time for this up-dating process. Will individual career occupants have to plan and budget for their own learning, or will private and/or public organizations take on some of this burden because it will ultimately be to their advantage as organizations?

We may also see an acceleration of the process of out placing obsolete people and replacing them with younger more up to date talent. The burden of re-learning will then fall more and more on the individual career occupant but as that becomes less and less feasible financially, we may see the growth of industry consortia who will share the burden of retraining with universities. Supplemental funds may well come from government, creating alliances between several sectors of the society as was the case with the retraining of the engineers from the big aerospace layoffs in the 1970's. It is easy to predict that the organization of the future will be a knowledge based organization. It is another matter to design such an organization and figure out how knowledge based careers will work out in a rapidly changing technological environment.

**General Managerial Competence:** This anchor category continues to attract its share of career occupants who understand what is really involved. It is also a category that is publicly espoused because of the great rewards that are presumed to go with high level general management jobs, but increasingly the technical/functionally anchored person recognizes that the skill set and emotional make-up that is needed for such jobs is fundamentally different. One must be highly motivated to exist in the increasingly political environment, one must have analytical and financial skills, high levels of interpersonal competence to function in teams and in negotiations and, most important of all, one must have the emotional make-up to make highly consequential decisions with only partial information.
The need for general management will unquestionably increase and will be pushed to lower levels in the organization. As work becomes more technically complex it requires greater coordination and integration at lower and lower levels. As we can see in today's organizations, whole layers of management are being cut out and organizations are being flattened and re-designed around multiple shifting project teams. Often those teams are described as self-managed, implying that centralized controls will be reduced to fewer and fewer functions. The skills of general management, i.e. analytical, inter-personal and emotional competence, will therefore be needed at lower and lower levels. Team managers, project managers and program managers will have to have general management and leadership skills above and beyond their technical understanding of the tasks at hand [14, 15]. Whereas in many organizations today one does not become a general manager until one is at department or division level and promotion to general management implies a big status jump on the organizational ladder, in the future those skills will have to be present so much lower in the organization that the status of general management will become much more variable. Managerial ladders as such may become much fuzzier and status will be defined more by the number of skills a given manager has than by position in a hierarchy.

General management, like leadership, may cease to be a role or a position and become more of a process skill that will be needed in all kinds of roles and positions. From being a noun, it will become a verb and the skills may come to be distributed among the members of a group or team rather than residing in a single individual. Everyone will be expected to become somewhat competent at management and leadership. The career occupant with a general management anchor will be forced to examine once again what he or she is really after--power, glory, responsibility, accomplishment of a task, the ability to build and manage a team, or various combinations of these.

**Entrepreneurial Creativity:** More and more people are drawn to the idea that they can develop their own business and, as the world become more dynamic and complex, the opportunities for individuals with this anchor will increase dramatically. The need for new products and services deriving from information technology, bio-technology and as yet unknown new technologies will continue to increase. The increasing mobility that is available in the world today will make it more and more feasible for the entrepreneur to go to whatever part of the world is most hospitable to his or her ideas. The dynamic complexity of industry will put a premium on creativity and it is creativity that is at the core of this anchor.

It is the new companies created by this group that will be the major source of new jobs for the other anchor groups. Maintaining an economic, political and cultural environment that is friendly and encouraging to entrepreneurship therefore becomes a major issue for society. For example, one can imagine that the political issues around tax reform should be analyzed primarily from the point of view of not destroying the economic incentive for entrepreneurs. At the same time, business and management schools should recognize the importance of training people for both entrepreneurship and more autonomous careers.

**Service/Dedication to a Cause:** The number of people showing up with this anchor is increasing. More and more young people as well as mid-life career occupants report that they are feeling the need not only to maintain an adequate income, but to do something meaningful in a larger context. As the world becomes more conscious of large scale problems such as the environment, the growing gap between the developed and the underdeveloped world, the problems of race and religion, product safety, privacy, overpopulation and social responsibility issues around health and welfare, new kinds of organizations and careers are being created to address these issues. The information technology explosion has made all of the world's problems highly visible and thus drawn the attention of the more service oriented. The service anchor combined with the entrepreneurial anchor is already creating new organizations devoted to recycling, to privatizing health care and welfare, to managing the environmental problems through products that use less energy, to waste management and so on. Such organizations will, in turn, absorb a lot of the technologically unemployed as well as attracting some of the best and brightest of the new generations.

**Pure Challenge:** There has always been a small group who defined their career in terms of overcoming impossible odds, solving the unsolved problems and winning out over one's competitors. It is my impression that this group is growing in number but it is not clear whether more people are entering the labor force with this predisposition or whether it is an adaptation to the growing challenges that the world is presenting to us.
In any case, there will not be a shortage of challenges to be met, so long as this group is willing to become active learners as well since the nature of these challenges will itself evolve rapidly with technological change.

In summary, what we have seen so far is that each of the anchor categories still attracts a set of people, but that the working out of a given anchor can become problematic as the world of work and organizational structure becomes more turbulent. The main effect is that people will have to become more self-reliant and figure out where their particular anchor best fits into the emerging occupational structure. The ability to analyze oneself as well as the ability to figure out what kind of job is available and how that job will evolve becomes crucial. Moreover it helps in creating innovative behavior at workplace as people do not suffer stagnation and are read to experiment and take risks [10, 12].

**Conceptual Framework:** An employee’s career anchor or career orientation is significant because it influences the selection of specific occupations and work settings and it affects the employee’s reactions to his or her work experience. There is considerable research on the types of career anchors and their relation with job satisfaction, commitment and retention within organizations [11, 16, 17]. The past research also supports gender difference in the choice of career anchors. Women were more lifestyle oriented and less technically oriented than men [18]. However there is little research on the correlation of career anchors with innovative behavior at workplace. This study addresses this gap in the literature and proposes the relationship of career anchors with age, gender and job category (Figure 1). Based on existing literature and further conceptualisation, the following propositions /sub-propositions are formulated on the relation of career anchors with innovative behavior.

**Proposition 1:** The Knowledge level of employees about career anchors leads to innovative behavior at workplace.

1a: The female employees are more likely to hold technical or managerial career orientations, such as security, autonomy, entrepreneurial, service, pure challenge, or lifestyle career orientations.

1b: The senior employees are more likely to hold technical or managerial career orientations, such as security, autonomy, entrepreneurial, service, pure challenge, or lifestyle career orientations.

1c: The career orientations of employees are unrelated to the type of positions they hold.

**DISCUSSION**

In view of the changing global environment the organisation will face some primary issues and will redesign their structures. A group of researchers from MIT [19] developed some possible scenarios thinking about the 21st century. In one scenario one can imagine the world being dominated by a small number of very large organisations with centralized functions and develop broad policies towards career and employment. Such global organizations could then be joined as a life time propositions and a person’s career identity would be defined by the global super-unit. The other scenario is that the world will break up into smaller and various kinds of organisations that will constantly change their primary functions, their personnel etc. There would be no common policies in such organisations and people would manage their economic affairs themselves. Externally defined careers would become rare and the need for clear internal career definitions would become psychologically more and more important. A third possibility is that both of the above scenarios will materialize, that there will be a few super-organisations operating on a global scale and a great number smaller organizations many of whom would operate as a sub-contractors to the large units. The individual career occupant would have to make choices early in the career as to whether to link to the large global organizations or move among the smaller and temporary systems that will evolve.
The large units offer a new basis for career security as long as the person is willing to maintain the skill levels needed and be willing to be moved in response to the organizations needs. Managerial ladders will, of necessity, continue to exist in these organizations though with few rungs. Technically/functionally anchored careerists will find broad opportunities in such organisations. The career occupants with entrepreneurial autonomy, service, pure challenge or life style anchors will find the smaller organizational.

Sets more receptive to the kind of work they want to do. In each of the scenarios there are opportunities for all of anchor types however sorting out and matching process would be difficult and will require more.

Self-Management of Career: This study provides valuable information to develop the skills in analyzing and designing the work itself. The Human resource department of various organisations can develop modules based of this study and incorporate them in their training and development program. They can also use this study for career counselling of the employees to prepare their workforce to meet the challenges of the future and to sustain the present challenges of 21st century. Moreover the relationship between career anchors and gender of the manager will enable the organizations to plan strategically for the overall growth of the employees unaffected by the stereotypical myths of gender. The present study theoretically added to the career stage model of Dalton et al [16] by discussing the relationship of career anchors with seniority level of the employees. It would be useful to determine whether and how career orientations change as people pass through the four stages of Dalton et al.’s [16] model.

This study will help the organizations to develop their reward systems according to the career orientations of the employees. For example rewarding a life-style -oriented employee with a better job that requires a geographical transfer, a technically oriented employee with a new managerial assignment, or an autonomy-oriented employee with a lucrative but constraining promotion may well detract from motivation and performance.

The present study discussed the relationship of career orientation with the type of Industry however further research is needed to determine the consequences of a mismatch between career orientation and job setting. First, the effects of a mismatch on job performance need to be examined, as it is possible that incompatibility in job and career orientations results in poor job performance over time. Second empirical research needs to examine the kinds of job experiences that are most compatible with a wide array of career orientations. To conclude further work is needed to examine the relationship between career orientations and important job outcomes-including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover and productivity.

REFERENCES