



## Effect of Protean Career Attitudes on Organizational Commitment of Employees with Moderating Role of Organizational Career Management

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to develop a conceptual framework for theoretical background explaining about the expected relationship between protean career attitudes and organizational commitment with moderating role of organizational career management (OCM) within today's unstable and uncertain career scenario. Career literature shows that individuals having a protean career attitudes are less committed to their organizations however any practical researches on this relationship are not sufficient and need further empirical investigation. Review literature summarize the organizational commitment and its possible relationship with protean career attitudes with moderating role of OCM. This is followed by conceptual framework and propositions. Further it is suggested that individuals with protean career attitudes do not result in less organizational commitment until organization does not ignore them for OCM. Upcoming future research must examine practically the correlation between protean career attitudes and organizational commitment of employees with moderating role of OCM. HR practitioners, managers, and organizations should develop the protean career attitudes in order to utilize their valuable skills and abilities. It is also suggested that organization can enhance the organizational commitment of employees when they perceive sufficient career development opportunities. This paper contributes to the career literature by theoretically identifying the relationship between protean career and organizational commitment with moderating impact of OCM. In future this study will empirically investigate the correlation between protean career attitudes and organizational commitment with moderating role of organizational commitment of hotels managers in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Protean Career Attitudes, Organizational Commitment, Organizational Career Management

**JEL Classification:** L2

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The varying nature of career and people behavior requires a healthier mutual understanding between employees and employers (Weng and McElroy, 2012; Weng et al., 2010). Pressures of globalization, technological advances, and the communication revolution have changed job design, which have meant key adjustments for many employees (Burke and Ng, 2006). Along with these essential employment market changes in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, and coping with them, have also changed the workplace attitudes of many employees. As a result employees try to find more empowerment of their own career growth (Direnzo and Greenhaus, 2011), and rather than by their employing

organization and get benefits and satisfaction set by themselves (Weng and McElroy, 2012; Weng et al., 2010). Organizations have started downsizing and diverted to leaner and flatter organizational structure in response to globalization, competitiveness around the world and economic recession worldwide (Sullivan, 1999).

Career researcher suggested that protean career attitude is the suitable coping trait to the current uncertain career scenario (Gubler et al., 2014; Hall and Mirvis, 1996). While the concept of protean career has gained substantial recognition and attracted significant research attention (Baruch et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2014), empirical investigations regarding this career orientation are still in the early stages. In this context, it identifies that traditional career

model losing its worth and consequently replaced by protean career, which can realize the changing scenario in a better way (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Baruch, 1999; Bridges, 1995). The two aspects of protean career attitudes (self-directed, value driven) suggest that individuals become the owner of their own career instead of organizational career (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). Researchers have discussed that fluctuations in economy have changed the nature of psychological contracts (Rousseau and Wade-Benzoni, 1995) and ultimately employees have lost their organizational commitment (Cappelli, 1999), organizational commitment of employees requires further re-examination (Baruch, 1998; Hervas-Oliver et al., 2013). I believe that organizational career management (OCM) programs will enhance the organizational commitment of protean career attitudes (Eisenberger et al., 2002). We consider that organizations offering career development opportunities for protean career (self-directed and value driven attitudes) can retain the organizational commitment of employees (Briscoe and Finkelstein, 2009).

A noteworthy gap in the literature also exists about the relationship between protean career attitudes and organizational commitment. Protean career attitudes have been less investigated from organizational outcomes like organizational commitment and mostly analyzed from individual perspectives such as career success and employability (McArdle et al., 2007).

The purpose of this article is to identify the relationship between organizational commitment and protean career attitudes, because people with protean attitudes are proactive and thought to be less committed to their organization (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Greenhall, 1982; Hall, 1976; Hall, 2002; Zaleska and de Menezes, 2007). It is still inconclusive that protean career attitudes are the real predictors of organizational commitment or not and need for empirical investigation (Zaleska and de Menezes, 2007). To understand it better that how protean career attitudes affect the organizational commitment; we will first review these theoretical constructs.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Protean Career Attitudes

The term protean derived from the Latin word *proteus* that refers to great individual ability to adjust the shape of something in dealing with uncertainty (Briscoe and Hall, 2006). Protean career attitudes possess two essential features: Being self-directed and being values-driven. Self-direction here refers to the degree to which an individual takes control of his/her own career strategically (Briscoe and Hall, 2006; Mirvis and Hall, 1994). A values-driven approach, on the other hand, refers to the high consciousness of individuals towards his or her own personal priorities and is used as the standards in making and assessing decisions (Hall and Mirvis, 1996). The individuals with these proactive traits are aware of their own career achievement as well as highly concerned with organization priorities (Grant and Ashford, 2008). As shown in reviewed literature, the protean career models refer to an indication of declining tendency in an organizational commitment but any practical research on this subject so far is found highly insufficient (Sullivan et al., 1998; Zaleska and de Menezes,

2007). Several career related outcomes have been found by former researchers on protean career attitudes. In contrast, far too little attention has been paid to examine theoretically based variables in predicting the correlation of protean career and organizational commitment of employees (Gubler et al., 2014; Rowe, 2013). According to various career researchers like Arthur and colleagues have contended that due to globalization and technological developments, careers are increasingly turning into boundaryless and individuals develop protean career attitudes in order to cope with uncertain situations of employment (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2002; Sullivan, 1999; Sullivan and Arthur, 2006).

To explore the relationship between protean career attitudes and organizational commitment is the focus of this study. This relationship would enable us to identify the expected behavioral consequences of different career attitudes, as commitment is one of the most important determinants of performance, loyalty, and turnover (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 1989; 2002; Mowday et al., 1982; Shore and Wayne, 1993). Furthermore, it is very essential for organizations to retain a competent pool of candidates with long-term affective commitment in order to sustain their competitiveness around the world.

### 2.2. Organizational Commitment

Considering its correlation to turnover intention and actual turnover (Briscoe and Finkelstein, 2009; Sullivan, 1999), organizational commitment becomes one of the most vital concepts in the field of human resource management (HRM), organizational behavior, and management (Cohen, 2007). It refers to an emotional bond or attachment between the employees and their organization (Mahanta, 2012). In fact, these commitment modules are commonly perceived as affective, normative and continuous as three different concepts (Meyer et al., 2012). Amongst all these components, organizational affective commitment has been preferred to be the emphasis of this study.

To survive, organizations need to gain the commitment of their members. Here, organizational commitment has some critical implications for both individual and organizational outcomes and it is a central issue for organizations (Ito and Brotheridge, 2005; Kavi, 2013). Past studies found that organizational commitment is negatively related to employees' intention to leave (Lee et al., 2012; Peachey et al., 2014). Employees with higher levels of organizational commitment tend to work towards the benefit of the organization (Meyer et al., 2004), which in turn, generates positive outcomes at both individual and organizational levels such as employee loyalty and job satisfaction. Empirical research reveals some consequences of organizational commitment essential to highlight including intentions to leave the organization, absenteeism, and low level of job performance (Becker et al., 1996; Gellatly et al., 2006; Luchak and Gellatly, 2007; Mowday et al., 1982).

Having studied the literature, it has been found that, as implied in the protean career models, there is a declining tendency in organizational commitment (Zaleska and de Menezes, 2007). The ones having protean career attitudes might have a lack of commitment to their organizations (Sullivan, 1999). Apart from

how well-known the protean career models in correlation with decline of organizational commitment; there, however, has been little discussion in an empirical research about this issue, so far (Briscoe and Finkelstein, 2009; Sullivan et al., 1998). Empirical research carried out by Briscoe and Finkelstein (2009) to explore the relationship between protean career attitude and organizational commitment but did not find empirical support. These career researcher therefore suggested to use the other variables that may affect the relationship between protean career and organizational commitment (Briscoe and Finkelstein, 2009). OCM which is also called organizational support/supervisor support may be the predictor of organizational commitment (Verbruggen et al., 2007), because OCM has been found the strong predictor of organizational commitment (Ko et al., 1997). Therefore motivation of skill full employees with affective commitment is a challenging issue for organizations and employees. OCM can be the factor to retain the talent with different proactive behavior (Ito and Brotheridge, 2005; Kavi, 2013).

For this, it can be summarized that in the perspective of protean attitudes, workers will show an affecting obligation provided that they practice identity and worth fit with the current organization and this as a result realizes to stay with the same organization in consideration to the opportunities for endless learning and career growth as provided by organization (Agarwala, 2003; Meyer et al., 2004; Sturges et al., 2001). As it is discussed that people with protean career attitudes continually looking for career development opportunities, this reasonable organizational support seems rational.

Thus, the present study attempts to investigate theoretically whether the relationship between the protean career attitudes and organizational commitment is moderated by the OCM.

### 2.3. Moderating Effect of OCM

OCM refers to the programs or activities initiated by organizations in supporting their employees' career success (Kong et al., 2010). The issues of OCM have been largely studied by researcher (Birasnav and Rangnekar, 2012; Budhwar and Baruch, 2003). Perceived OCM was proposed to be an organizational influencing factor. OCM, which is also known as "organizational support for career development" or "organizational sponsorship," refers to different activities, programs and support provided by organizations to care and develop employees' career success (Ng et al., 2005; Orpen, 1994). OCM programs also called organizational career development (Verbruggen et al., 2007).

The new age organization perform noteworthy new part in the career development by providing more support to human assets (Baruch, 2006). Although responsibility for career management has been transferred to individuals from organizations yet organizational support for career management should not be neglected. Thus organizations can enhance their competitiveness' around the world by providing more career success to their employees (Baruch, 2006).

As described by career authors, employees career management initiated by organization build the development of employees

citizenship behavior (Kong et al., 2011). When OCM practices meet employees expectations (Kong et al., 2011), this will enhance commitment and other positive outcomes. Career management help can be seen as one form of perceived organizational support. Perceived organizational support has been positively related to job performance and negatively linked to withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism and turnover (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). I believe that OCM programs will enhance the organizational commitment of protean career attitudes (Eisenberger et al., 2002). It is very important to identify that individuals feel proud when they perceive the organizational support in achieving their goals (Cummings, 2008; Lent and Brown, 2006).

### 2.4. Problem Statement

Tourism industry is one of the National Key Economic Areas, significantly contributing to the Malaysian economy. The industry is seventh largest contributor to national income with gross national income (GNI) total of RM37.4 billion in 2011. The industry has been and will continue to be a key economic sector in Malaysia and can be evident by the increasing amount of arrivals and receipts of tourists to Malaysia. Its receipts of 1 billion per week from tourists, ranks Malaysia 13<sup>th</sup> globally with regard to tourist's receipts and shows a constant growth (ETP, 2011). Most importantly, with regard to vision 2020, it is expected that the industry will provide an incremental contribution of RM103.6 billion to the Malaysia's GNI.

Hotel sector is one of the major components in the country tourism industry that make up substantial proportion of the industry receipts and therefore it needs to be managed effectively. As the hotel industry is a human based industry, depends mainly on humans as an essential part of the product, because of their direct interaction with the customers. Although committed workforce is very important for the success and sustainable growth of the industry, unfortunately, labor turnover crises have been emerging globally in the face of many businesses, including hotel industry (Al Battat et al., 2013).

A high voluntary turnover in the hotel industry has been reported in recent studies and reports (Hemdi and Rahim, 2011). For example, in a nationwide survey of 143 companies across various sectors, conducted by Malaysian Employers Federation, hotel industry was reported among top three industries, facing employee retention issues; accounted an average 32.4% annual turnover rate (Nasyira, et al., 2014). This statistic pointed out that the average rate of voluntary turnover in hospitality industry is almost double than overall industry turnover rate which is 15.2% (Goh, 2012).

Past studies found that organizational commitment is negatively related to employees intention to leave (Lee et al., 2012; Peachey et al., 2014). Employees with higher levels of organizational commitment tend to work towards the benefit of the organization (Meyer et al., 2004), which in turn, generates positive outcomes at both individual and organizational levels such as employee loyalty and job satisfaction. Employees' organizational commitment is thus one of the key challenges affecting Malaysian hotel industry. Hence, it is imperative to know the factors that influence employee's level of commitment. Hospitality industry report more



problem to retain in experienced competent pool of managers (Wang and Tsai, 2012; Watson, 2008). The proposed conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.

### 2.5. Significance of the Study

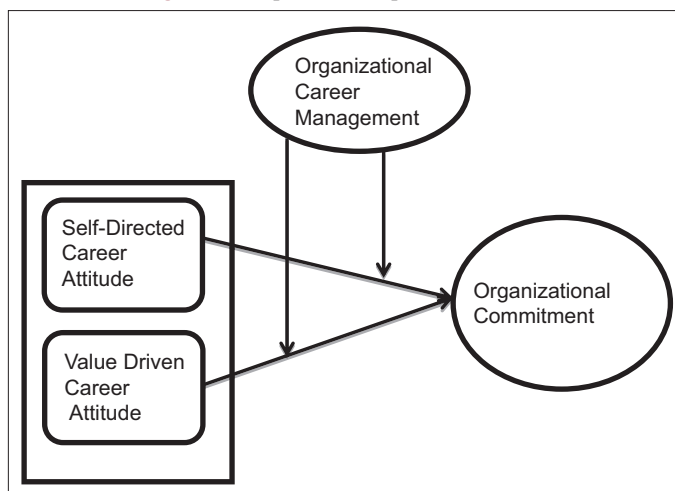
The present study makes several theoretical and practical contributions, as discussed below.

1. Theoretical contribution: Although career success construct has been extensively studied in the academic literature, its mediating role between protean career attitudes and organizational commitment has been less discussed; particularly, in terms of subjective and objective career success. The present study fills the research gap by examining career success as a potential mediator between protean career attitude and organizational commitment.
2. Past research studied OCM as an antecedent, and most often discussed in academic context such as schools, universities, less investigated in business organizations, especially in service industry. Hence, the inclusion of OCM as a potential moderator, and its discussion in service industry is a considerable theoretical contribution of the present study.
3. Majority of the studies on protean career have been conducted in Western world, especially in developed countries. However, studies on protean career attitude in developing countries such as Malaysia are rather limited. The present study enriches the literature on protean career in a new context.
4. Overall, the finding of this study will make a significant contribution on the empirical side of the literature on organizational commitment, career success, career attitude and career OCM.
5. Practical contribution: The findings of this study will help relevant authorities in hotel industry, HR practitioners, managers to better strategize future policies in order to increase employees' organizational commitment.

## 3. DISCUSSION

This conceptual article intended to enhance a theoretical background explaining about the expecting variables of protean

**Figure 1:** Proposed conceptual framework



career in its correlation to employees' organizational commitment. The research article determines that job-related, organizational and individual factors have some prophetic effects on employee's proactive protean career. The field of protean career and its relationship to organizational commitment correspond to the central pillar of HRM, playing an essential role for the advance employees' abilities and understanding along their career track (Ito and Brotheridge, 2005; Swanson and Holton, 2001). The main ideology of all these aspects is linked to protean career in individual career development.

Framework offers specific individual, organizational and job-related variables probably leading to protean career and employees' organizational commitment. HRM experts therefore should concern with the manifestation of protean career as new career developments between skilled employees (Eisenberger et al., 2002). They should identify its distinctive traits of internal value driven and self-directedness aspects of new career attitudes. HRM specialists here must assist and backing employees to assume their own obligation in career management (Kidd and Smewing, 2001). HRM practitioners principally need to concern with the outcomes of the effect of individual-related factors on protean career (Tseng and McLean, 2008).

Afterwards, there will be more self-confidence among employees to believe that there is a high determination of aptitudes and understanding towards the self-managed career rather than external powers such as good fortune, luck or probabilities. Expectedly, having taken a vigorous notice and deliver assistance in their employees' career growth, an organization would have more benefits in view of the organization ability to generate the commitment of the employees and minimize the intention of the employee for turnover (Briscoe and Finkelstein, 2009). In addition to this, it is important for the managers to have awareness for the possibility in correlation of job characteristics and protean career attitude.

## 4. CONCLUSION

In addition, this theoretical concept helps HR practitioners, managers, and organizations to understand the individuals having distinct protean career attitudes in order to utilize their skills and abilities. This review also provides a direction about the effect of OCM which can enhance the organizational commitment of protean career individuals. Further it is concluded that organization should realize the career success opportunities of employees in order to retain the protean career for long-term. Therefore organization should asses' different type of OCM programs.

This study helps HR practitioners to understand how employees view career development from the perspective of protean career. Therefore, management should assess various types of job design and organizational support programs and examine how these development opportunities affect employees' career scenarios. The conclusion of this study also point out that all those who have a protean career attitudes do not results in less organizational commitment automatically. Such declining intentions are related to organizational rigid policies. In this regard organizations need to re-examine policy of "throwing the baby with bath water."

Consequently the loyalty, caring and commitment of employees cannot be dismissed on protean career attitudes until organizations do not ignore them. We suggest the focus be less on how not to lose them and more on how to leverage their unique perspectives and offerings.

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