



Motivational orientation as a mediator in the relationship between personality and protean and boundaryless careers



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ABSTRACT

This study examined the associations between personality and protean and boundaryless career orientation and the mediating role of motivation orientation. In total, 273 Israeli students engaged in full-time employment completed questionnaires, which were used to assess the variables of interest. Structural equation modelling path analysis supported most of the expected hypotheses. The associations between personality and protean and boundaryless career orientation were partially mediated by motivation orientation. Learning goal orientation mediated two aspects of protean career orientation (self-directed and value driven), and one aspect of boundaryless career orientation (boundaryless mindset). Performance goal orientation exerted a negative mediatory effect on a second aspect of boundaryless career orientation (mobility preference). Overall, the results suggested that the Big Five traits, Extraversion and Conscientiousness, were associated with protean and boundaryless career orientation via learning goal orientation, and Neuroticism was associated with preference for organizational stability via performance goal orientation. Interestingly, Openness and Agreeableness were associated with protean and boundaryless career orientation via learning orientation and to preference for organizational stability via performance goal orientation.

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1. Introduction

Protean and boundaryless career orientation (PCO and BCO, respectively) have become salient in some organizations (Arthur, 1994; Baruch, 2004; Briscoe, Hall, & Demuth, 2006; Creed, Macpherson, & Hood, 2011a, 2011b; Hall, 2004; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), as Savickas et al. (2009) called for career theories that fit modern economies more closely. This involves expecting less stability and job security, identifying ways to learn and enhance skills, and broadening relationships outside the organization (Carbery & Garavan, 2005; Clarke & Patrickson, 2008; Creed et al., 2011; Trevor-Roberts, 2006). Some employees adapt to these dynamic conditions and adopt PCO and BCO easily. PCO and BCO are considered attitudes (Briscoe et al., 2006) and may not be stable; therefore, in predicting whether employees are likely to hold such attitudes, we cannot rely on direct measurement, as they could change. A robust measure is required to predict such attitudes. One predictor could be personality, which may offer inherent relative stability. Personality determines perceptions and reactions to the

environment, which could include organizational settings. Therefore, personality is a possible predictor of PCO and BCO. Some studies have found correlations between personality and PCO and BCO (Briscoe et al., 2006; Mintz, 2003). However, the reason for these associations is unclear. One possible explanation may involve motivational orientation, which refers to the way in which individuals direct their goals, either by approaching them as a way of learning during the process of developing new skills, as suggested by learning goal orientation (LGO), or by focussing on their final performance and striving to achieve the goals, as performance goal orientation (PGO) implies (Elliot & McGregor, 2001). Indeed, Briscoe et al. (2006) reported correlations between LGO and PCO and BCO. This study aimed to broaden understanding of the association between personality and PCO and BCO mediated by goal orientation.

This study was important, as an understanding of the association between personality characteristics and career orientation could assist organizational practitioners in selecting the best candidates in terms of PCO and BCO. Moreover, examining the mechanism underlying motivational mediation could elucidate this relationship.

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2. Conceptualization of PCO and BCO

PCO and BCO have received considerable attention in the literature, but some questions require further examination, as discussed in Culié, Khapova, and Arthur (2014). Current unstable and dynamic employment conditions, including advanced technology, frequent manpower reduction, global competition, and changes in social norms, increase employees' sense of ambiguity regarding what they desire and expect from organizations (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Blustein, 2006; Gubler, Arnold, & Coombs, 2014; Hall, 2002). In response, employees have developed modern- or new-economy career orientation including boundaryless careers and a protean view of career success (Baruch, 2004; Briscoe et al., 2006; Hall, 1976, 2002, 2004; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009).

Hall (1976) introduced the concept of a protean view of career success as opposed to the traditional view, which reflects the transfer of responsibility for self-development to the individual (Arnold & Cohen, 2008; Arthur et al., 2005; Gratton & Ghoshal, 2003). Employees play an independent role in their career management; therefore, they are self-directed. They also rely on their own, rather than organizational, values and are therefore value driven (Briscoe et al., 2006). Changes in organizational contexts, such as employers increasing efficiency by cutting employees off and threatening job stability, increase employees' proactive involvement in career management and responsibility for their own careers. Advances in technology and the need to learn and adjust to new situations increase employees' orientation towards developing their capabilities and skills. These individuals are flexible, self-motivated, and willing to adjust to every change (Niles, Herr, & Hartung, 2002). The protean career involves learning cycles (Hall & Mirvis, 1996) that recur every few years (Hall, 2002) and improve performance. Moreover, people with protean orientation are motivated to learn (Briscoe & Hall, 2006).

Gubler et al. (2014) recently distinguished between the protean career concept, which refers to Hall's (1976, 2002) theoretical concept, and PCO, which refers to individuals taking charge of their careers (DiRenzo & Greenhaus, 2011) and adapting to changing environments (Hall, 2002). This includes self-directed and value-driven orientation, as reflected in the Protean Career Mindset Scale (Briscoe et al., 2006) used in the present study.

Arthur's (1994) BCO is similar to the protean view, in that it reflects subjective perception of career success. However, it differs from the protean view, in that individuals with boundaryless views do not necessarily rely on one organization in developing their careers. For instance, globalization caused employees to work beyond the boundaries of a single organization, which created working relationships across organizational boundaries. PCO and BCO are related but independent factors (Briscoe et al., 2006). Individuals with BCO often establish relationships outside the organization, across organizational boundaries. Arthur and Rousseau (1996) described boundaryless careers as unfolding beyond a single employment setting; therefore, they are often believed to involve physical employment mobility (McCabe & Savery, 2007).

Some researchers recently raised the issue of mobility across organizational boundaries as a basic element in the boundaryless career. Sullivan and Arthur (2006) suggested that both physical (physically moving between jobs and organizations) and psychological mobility (psychologically moving between jobs and organizations) are components of a boundaryless career. This suggests that future research should consider differences between boundaryless career definitions, particularly the involvement of physical and psychological mobility. Some researchers (e.g. Briscoe et al., 2006) have viewed boundaryless careers as involving psychological or 'one's general attitude to working across organizational boundaries' and suggested that they do not necessarily lead to

employment instability. This suggests that employees can maintain contacts outside the organization and continue to value occupational stability (Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009; Briscoe, Henagan, Burton, & Murphy, 2012; Verbruggen, 2012).

According to Okurame and Fabunmi (2014), BCO consists of two dimensions. The first is psychological mobility across organizations, which was examined by Briscoe et al. (2006) using the Boundaryless Career Scale and measures willingness to establish relationships outside the organization without physically leaving it. The second is physical mobility, examined using the Mobility Preference Scale, which measures willingness to physically leave the boundaries of the organization (Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009; Okurame & Fabunmi, 2014). One possible solution to the argument concerning physical or psychological mobility's involvement in BCO involves motivational orientation. Therefore, one aim of the study was to examine these aspects of psychological and physical mobility.

3. Hypothesis development

3.1. Personality, motivational goal orientation, PCO, and BCO

Personality is related to various career factors, for instance, career perception (Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). The Big Five Personality Scale is considered one of the most reliable, valid, and widely used scales via which to measure personality. Tupes and Christal (1961, 1992) and Norman (1963) are credited with developing the Big Five Inventory, which includes five personality dimensions: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience (hereinafter Openness), Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. In contrast to emotional stability, neuroticism represents poor emotional adjustment expressed as stress, anxiety, and depression. In contrast to introversion, extroversion represents the tendency to be sociable, dominant, and positive and seek stimulation (Watson & Clark, 1992). Individuals who score highly on Openness enjoy new experiences and ideas and are creative, flexible, curious, and unconventional (McCrae, 1996). Agreeableness refers to the tendency to be compassionate, kind, gentle, trusting, trustworthy, and warm. Therefore, agreeable people seek a cooperative, team-oriented, conflict-free workplace (Judge & Cable, 1997). Conscientious individuals are self-disciplined, achievement oriented, dependable (Barrick & Mount, 1991), orderly, and deliberate (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Therefore, they seek an organized, predictable, outcome-focused working environment (Judge & Cable, 1997).

The cybernetic personality model could explain the relationship between personality and career perception (Van Egeren, 2009). Functional personality theories claim that personality is adaptive (Borkenau, 1990; Hogan, 1983; Van Egeren, 2009). For instance, approaching rewarding stimuli, such as food, and avoiding dangers, such as predators, play a role in the organism's survival. Cybernetic personality theory suggests that Big Five personality traits play different roles in environmental adaptation: Extraversion: reaction to reward; Neuroticism: detecting errors in achieving goals and avoiding frustrating goal-related stimuli; Conscientiousness: approaching rewards and avoiding errors depending on the situation; Openness: sensitivity to environmental information to enhance adaptability and survival; and Agreeableness: achieving goals via cooperation (Van Egeren, 2009). Therefore, personality may have an adaptive role in modern organizational environments, in that certain personalities adapt to certain jobs, organizations, and career perceptions, such as PCO and BCO, more easily.

PCO and BCO have been positively associated with Openness (Briscoe et al., 2006; Mintz, 2003), Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness (Mintz, 2003). However, the reasons why correlations between personality and PCO and BCO exist have not been

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