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How Individuals Construct their Career Stories? A Conceptual Review on Individual Career Management Behaviors

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Abstract

A career is, seen as a central part of an individual's life in that it contributes to the development of one's identity, and it is suggested that individuals, to a larger extent today than before, are looking for personal development and growth in their working environments and careers (Baruch & Budhwar, 2006). This increasing emphasis placed on individual's career related needs can be argued to constitute new challenges for employers with regard to the choice and delivery of human resource management (HRM) activities such as career management. The death of traditional onward and upward, centrally managed career lead to the emergence of 3 major concepts, 'career self management', 'employability', and 'marketability'. The responsibility of career development shifted more towards employees. So in this changing career scenario the role of organization in understanding and managing the career development practices of individuals became highly relevant. This paper is a qualitative research study which deals with the changing nature of careers and it primarily addresses various individual career management practices in the changing organizational career context and its major antecedents. The study is intended to develop a New model for career self management. The article concludes by considering the implications for future research.

Keywords: Careers, Career Self-Management, Organizational Support, Career Goal

Introduction

"Focus on career, not merely the job" is the mantra for successful employers and employees. There was a time when individuals advance hierarchically within a single organization over the course of their career. Recent literature on career management is generally unanimous in proclaiming that careers have undergone fundamental changes since 1990's (Arthur & Rousseau 1996; Parker & Inkson 1999). New career concepts like "Boundaryless career" (Arthur & Rousseau 1996) "Protean career" (Hall 1996) and "Post-corporate career" (Periperl & Baruch 1997) have emerged. Organizational environment has become more volatile and unstable so that the individuals can no longer expect lifetime employment within one organization or a steady climb up the corporate ladder. However, during the last few decades the notion that individuals are also responsible to cater to and build their own careers, instead of leaving it entirely to the organization to manage, has been well documented.

The evolution of new career concepts brought in more responsibility upon individual on management of their careers. So the study of career self management will have more implications on the changing careers scenario. It helps us to understand not only how people achieve satisfaction at work but also how they fit work into the rest of their lives (Richardson 1996). From a talent management perspective it is important that research investigates the effect of individual career management (ICM) on work-related attitudes and behaviors because it could lead to the development of competitive advantage for organizations (Orpen 1994; Sturges et al. 2002).

The study was based on the extensive literature review and all the information collected was secondary in nature. The study gives intimation that careers have changed a lot during these years. Organizational career management activities have been replaced by career self management but at the same time previous literatures have showed that organizational support for career self management initiatives can bring in various organizational outcomes. Thus the researcher identified major career self management practices and framed a theoretical model which explains organizational, career related and individual antecedents of career self management practices initiated by employees. The study shows that all the antecedents have various effects on career self management practices.

Changing Nature of Careers

Since the 1990s scholars and business commentators have advocated that organizational transformation is occurring on a global scale (Hall & Moss 1998). In the careers field, theoretical development has shifted away from 'traditional' views of career as linear, predictable trajectories in favor of 'non-traditional' or 'new' views of career (Briscoe & Finkelstein 2009; Briscoe et al. 2006). In particular, it is argued that Organizational career is no longer relevant to today's organizational reality (Arthur & Rousseau 1996; Kanter 1989). At its most basic level, this rhetoric suggests that organizational careers have ceased to exist. People may still have job, but they no longer have a career, at least in the traditional sense of word: "climbing the corporate ladder is being replaced by hopping from job to job (Kanter 1989) these new career models, most notably the protean (Hall & Moss 1998) and the Boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau 1996), emphasize individual control over employability and skills development above and beyond organizational career management (Bosley, Arnold & Cohen 2007). The new career is described as portable because an individual's success depends on the transfer of skills from organization to organization (Kanter 1989). It is Boundaryless, because it can no longer be defined within the confines of one company (Mirvis & Hall 1994) ; and it is protean, because it changes shape to accommodate the individuals personal and work circumstances. The concept of boundary less career, developed by Arthur and Rousseau (1996), predicted on the assumption that organizations are no longer able (or willing to) to offer workers job stability and progressive careers in exchange for loyalty (Arthur & Rousseau 1996). It is opposite to the organizational career and is associated with physical mobility across jobs, functions and organizations as well as the demise of rigid job structures and hierarchical career paths (Briscoe et al. 2006; Defilippi & Arthur 1996). The key concepts underlying in Boundaryless careers are flexibility, networking, marketable skills and continuous learning that unfolds across

organizational boundaries (Sullivan & Arthur 2006). Thus in short, boundary less career can be defined as a sequence of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of a single employment setting (Defilippi & Arthur 1996). Hall (2004) has developed the idea of the protean career. It is defined as the extent to which an individual manages his or her career in a pro-active self directed way driven by personal values and subjective career criteria (DiRenzo & Greenhaus 2011; Hall 1996). Protean career orientation motivates people to adapt to changing environments and to assign responsibility for a career to oneself rather than on employing organization (Hall 2002). Hence, protean career embrace psychological aspects such as self- direction, adaptability, identity and values. Meanwhile, the meaning of Boundaryless career refers to observable behavior and predictability. As a result of these evolutionary changes in careers, a new perspective on the relationship between organizations and individuals has evolved, indicating a shift away from the view of having a “job for life” toward a need for being “employable”. It is perhaps unsurprising that academics and practitioners have proclaimed the end of the centrally managed career, and the emergence of “career self management”, “employability” and “marketability”. Subsequently, the psychological contract between the relevant parties in the employment relationship has been rewritten and new job duties and responsibility areas for both employers and employees have been considered (Rousseau 1996). As a result, the balance between organizational and individual career management, which is said to have previously existed (Orpen 1994), has shifted towards a position of self reliance for the individual (Kanter 1989). This has lead to the development of a subsidiary rhetoric extolling the benefits both for employers and for employees of individuals managing their own careers. Resolutely positive, it liberates the individual from the constraints of the organization to allow them to pursue what they perceive to be their “path with a heart” (Hall & Mirvis 1996).

Objectives of the Study

1. To study changing career scenario in organizations.
2. To study and explore different career self management behaviors of employees in changing career context.
3. To identify various antecedents of career self management behaviors and propose a theoretical model for career self management behaviors.

Methodology

This is a conceptual paper based on the secondary data available through books, magazines and research papers. The data is mainly collected from the secondary sources which include articles published in journals, research papers, published interviews of professionals in newspapers, magazines and websites of different companies.

Career Self Management

Career self-management refers to the pro-activity employees show with respect to managing their careers (King 2004; Kossek et al. 1998; Orpen 1994). It includes employee’s efforts to define and realize their personal career objectives, which can or cannot correspond with the organization’s objectives (De Vos & Soens 2008). Career self management involves those activities that allow individuals to make a realistic self assessment of their own talents and

capabilities in view of organizational opportunities as well as concrete actions (e.g., networking, self nomination, creating opportunities) undertaken to realize these ambitions (Noe 1996; Sturges et al. 2002). In short career self management has been conceptualized as a three stage process by which individuals collect information about values, interests and skill strengths and weaknesses (career exploration); Identify a career goal; and engage in strategies that increase the probability that career goals will be achieved (Noe1996) (refer Figure 01).

Figure 01: Career Self Management Process



Source: Noe (1996)

Previous studies have explored in detail the third stage of this process, that is, the kind of behavior required to implement a career strategy. The researchers had identified several individual career management practices exhibited by employees in order to achieve their career goal. King coined all those previous studies and it is given in Table 01.

Table 01: Major Career Self Management Behaviors identified from Organizational careers literature

Career self management behaviors	Identified By
Extended work involvement	Pahl and Pahl (1971); Whyte (1956)
Self-nomination	Hall (1976); Jennings (1971)
Exposure and visibility	Hall (1976); Heissler and Gemmill (1978); Jennings (1971); Kanter (1977); Whyte (1956)
Improving skills and qualifications	Sofer (1970)
Building reputation	Kanter (1977)
Interpersonal relations	Kanter (1977); Sofer (1970), Whyte (1956)
Impression management	Kipnis and Vanderveer (1971); Sofer (1970); Whyte (1956); Worturan and Linsenmeier (1977)
Strategic choice of job moves	Jennings (1971); Kanter (1977); Martin and Strauss (1956); Sofer (1970)
Building informal relationships	Dalton (1951); Dill <i>et al.</i> (1962); Granovetter (1973); Mansfield (1972)
Political manoeuvring	Bass (1968); Dalton (1951); Gemmill and De Salvia (1977); Mansfield (1973)
Moving between organisations	Jennings (1967); Mansfield (1973); Whyte (1956)

Source: King, Z., 2001, Career self management practices, p. 44)

But later on all these behaviors were coined and certain core behaviors were found out by the researchers. They are presented by Table 02.

Table 02: Core Career Self Management Behaviors

Core Career Self Management behaviors	Identified by
Networking behavior	Forret and Dougherty (2004)
Visibility Behavior	Sturges et al. (2002)
Positioning behavior	King (2003)
Influencing behavior	King (2003)
Validating behavior	Sturges (2008)
Mobility oriented behavior	Chiaburu, Baker & Pitariu (2006); Sturges et al. (2002); (2008)
Behaviors intended to build human capital	King (2004)
Work/non-work management boundary management behavior	Sturges (2008)
Feedback seeking	Kossek et al. (1998)
Expertise development	Nabi (2000)
Career plan implementation	Raabi et. al. (2007)

Source: Sturges, Conway, & Liefoghe (2010)

Networking behavior, concerned with getting to know influential people (Monica & Dougherty 2004); Visibility Behavior, that is, drawing attention to work achievements (Sturges et al. 2002); positioning behavior, for example, pursuing valuable job opportunities (King 2003); Influencing behavior, intended to influence the decisions of superiors at work (King 2003); validating behavior, related to establishing a professional identity (Sturges 2008); mobility oriented behavior, that is making plans to leave the organization (Chiaburu, Baker & Pitariu 2006; Sturges, Conway & Liefoghe 2008; Sturges et al. 2002) and behavior relating to building human capital, for example, through training and education (King 2004). Work and non work boundary management behavior is an important Career Self Management strategy by placing the work/non-work boundary in a way that favors the pursuit of work and career interests, by permitting the boundary to be permeable enough for work activities to be conducted in non-work time or space, and by making the boundary flexible to prioritize the work issue at the expense of the home issue (Sturges et al. 2008). Expertise development involves the individual's motivation to develop skills and experience to expand career opportunities (Nabi 2000). While Developmental feedback seeking is the degree to which one seeks feedback on performance and career development requirement (Kossek et al. 1998) and through career plan implementation behaviors individuals monitor their environments, collecting information to help in planning a course of action and, as a consequence of goals and information, they develop plans (Raabe, Frese & Beehr 2007).

In this core career self management behaviors except mobility oriented behavior, all other career self management behaviors are beneficial for the organizations, since because they are aimed at furthering the career inside organization (Sturges et al. 2005; Sturges et al. 2008, 2010; 2002). Whereas mobility oriented behaviors are aimed at furthering the career outside the organization which will result in adverse organizational outcomes such as turnover, decrease in organizational commitment etc (Sturges et al. 2002).

Career Self Management –Antecedents

The current career scenario signifies the increased role of career self management practices. Today in the changing career context, we have identified several career self management

practices but it is very important to understand its major individual as well as organizational outcomes. If these career self management practices have beneficial outcomes, it is important to know the major antecedents which leads to these practices. The type of career self management behavior that an individual practices depends up on 4 major variables (De Vos, Dewettinck & Buyens 2009; King 2001; 2004; Noe 1996; Raabe et al. 2007; Sturges et al. 2010; 2002).

1. Career variable
2. Organizational variables
3. Individual variables
4. Demographic variables

In career self-management behavior, an individual practices at a specified time, and relies on a number of career-related factors. First, it is determined by the career goal that individuals are attempting to accomplish (Nabi 2000; Noe 1996; Sturges 2008). Secondly, it relies on the career stage of the individual (Sturges 2008), because differing types of behaviours might be more or less valuable at various career stages. Thirdly, it is decided by whether their career strategy is intended to advance their career within their present organisation or direct its management outside the organisation (Kossek et al. 1998; Sturges et al. 2002). Career attitude can also become an antecedent for career self management behaviors (De vos et al. 2004).

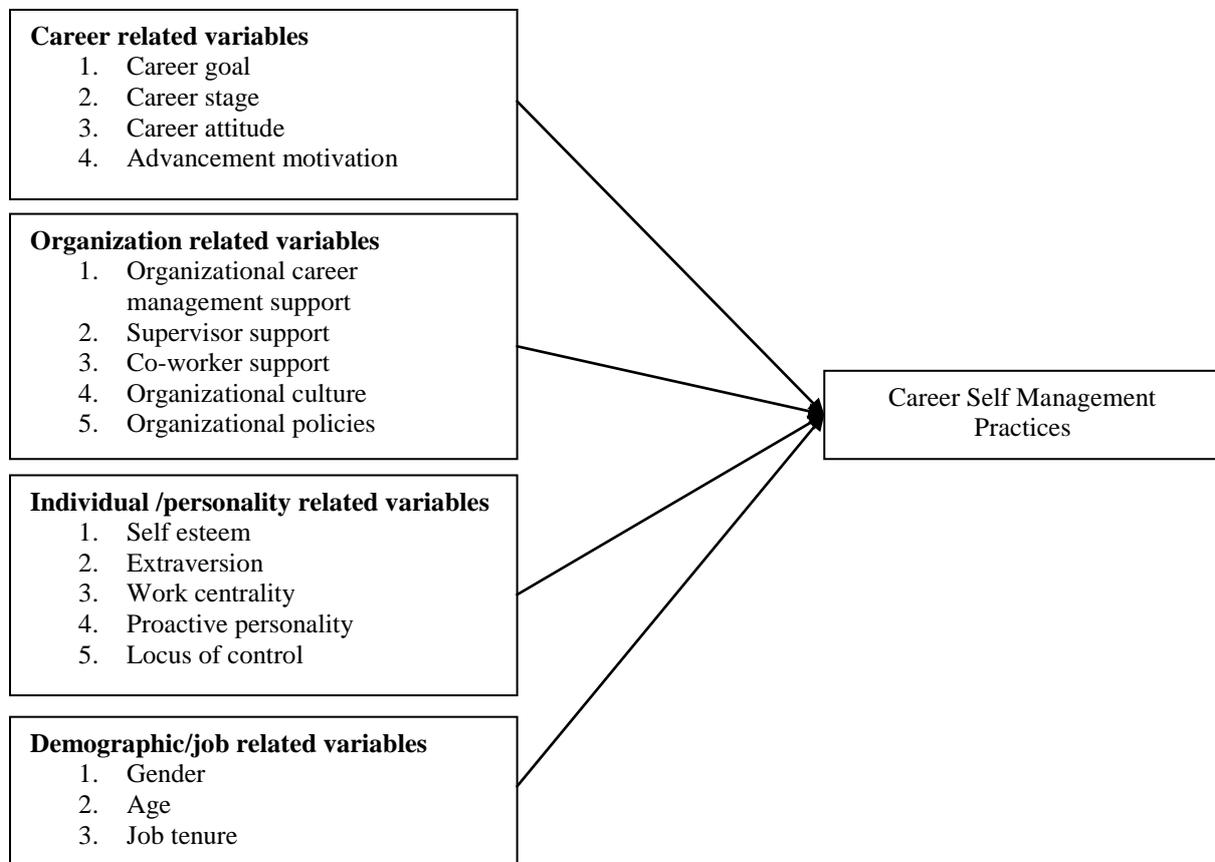
Several organizational related variables also affect individuals engagement in career self management behaviors. According to previous research works, it is evident that even though career self management got much significance in the changed career environment career management support from the organization is positively correlated with career self management practices intended to build career inside the organization (Arnold 1997; Sturges et al. 2002). Supervisor support as well as co-worker support can become a motivating factors for employees to engage in various career self management practices (Chiaburu, Baker & Pitariu 2006; King 2004; Sturges et al. 2010). In a study conducted at Iceland (Sturges 2008), researcher empirically had been proven the effect of organizational environment as well as culture on the career self management behaviors of employees.

Individual/personality related variables like self esteem, extraversion, work centrality, proactive personality and locus of control (Monica & Dougherty 2004; Hetty van Emmerik et al. 2006; Nabi 2000; Sturges et al. 2008, 2010; 2002) are also found to be antecedents of career self management behaviors. Self esteem, extraversion, pro-activity have been linked to career self management behaviors including networking, developmental feedback seeking and mobility oriented behaviors (Chiaburu et al. 2006; Forret & Dougherty 2001). Work centrality is found to be associated with networking and expertise development behaviors (Nabi 2000). Locus of control (defined as the extent to which people believe that they have control over their own fate (Ng, Sorensen & Eby 2006), which is found to be negatively associated with mobility oriented behaviors.

Previous literature evidently signifies the effect of various demographic factors like gender, age, and work experience on career self management behaviors (Forret & Dougherty 2001;

Emmerik et al. 2006; Sturges et al. 2008; 2010; Raabi et al. 2007). Sturges (2000) signifies the correlation between age and self management activities. But Sturges (2002) reiterates that age is positively correlated with certain types of career self management behaviors like visibility behavior and previous studies explains that job tenure is negatively correlated with mobility oriented behavior. Based on the previous literature a theoretical model has been formulated as Figure 02.

Figure 02: Conceptual Model



Discussion and Conclusion

This study was conceptual in nature and it proposed a new model by considering all the existing studies in the relevant area. The current study identified variables such as locus of control, career attitude, job tenure etc which gives an addition on to the work done by Sturges et al. (2010) and it revealed that all these antecedents identified have a significant effect on career self management practices of employees. Previous studies revealed that organization had a major role in career self management behaviors of employees. Even though organizational career management practices have lost its significance, organizational career support for career self management is found to be a major antecedent which brings in positive organizational outcomes. All the other variables were found to have a role in initiating career self management practices. The significant effect of personality related variables needs much more empirical validity.

This article attempts to offer a deep insight into the various career self management behaviors practiced by employees .It also provided a brief summary of various causes or antecedents which leads to these kind behaviors. There is still considerable need for empirical research on career self-management, particularly beyond managerial and professional populations (King 2001). Antecedents identified in the study will contribute different organizational as well as individual outcomes, which needs further research and empirical support. It is hoped that this article will stimulate an academic debate on the subject. The vigorous researching of career self-management has become a pressing need, if we are to understand better our own lives and the lives of those whom we research.

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