A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK EXAMINING THE ANTECEDENTS OF CAREER DECISIVENESS USING MOTIVATION SYSTEMS THEORY

Srabasti CHATTERJEE
ADDRESSES
IFHE HYDERABAD, INDIA

ASBSRACT

An extensive body of vocational research has been dedicated to the topic of career-decision making behavior. Work is integral to human functioning, and all psychologists need to understand the role of work in people's lives. Understanding factors influencing work choices and helping individuals effectively make career decisions is the focus of vocational psychologists. The external changes, such as shifts in the economy and labour force, as well as initiatives within the field are challenging the assumptions within vocational psychology. Under such circumstances, it becomes more important to study career decisiveness and more importantly examine the process of career planning which eventually leads to career decisiveness. So there is a need to assess attitudes, expectations, and emotions about one's career in the form of Career Future Inventory to measure career choice or career decisiveness. Career decisiveness (CD) has been an instrumental tool for vocational psychologists and a   phenomenon of interest to parents, faculty, school counsellors, and others who advise young adults on their career choices. The current study shall investigate the antecedents and consequences of career decisiveness using the Motivational Systems Theory (MST). The major rational of applying MST is to understand career choice has its impetus both on the individual and contextual factors.

INTRODUCTION

India seems to have an advantage in terms of abundant supply to its work force owing to its demographic characteristics (India has over 550 million people who are 25 years or younger -Census report 2012).Despite this advantage,the employability level of the upcoming workforce has been questioned by experts. The country has a huge shortage of skilled people and this talent deficit is already hampering the manufacturing and services sectors' growth prospects. India's education system has been unable to support the rising demand for skill sets (Holtbrugge et al., 2010).

The main reason for this shortage of qualified applicants is large differences in the level of education at universities and colleges across the country. While some have an excellent reputation, others can hardly provide sufficient education to prepare students for jobs in MNCs. (Holtbrugge et al., 2010). To add on to this difficult situation, the economic situations prevailing for the last few years have reduced the opportunity for meaningful employment for many. Forecasts of slowing economic growth in India, as part of the current global downturn, raised the unfortunate possibility of increase in unemployment and job loss (Swan & Tanner, 2009). The authors further stated that during the recession, companies were forced to preserve financial flexibility and do more with less.

In doing so, employers drastically reduced their workforces, and discovered that they could generate more productivity and innovation from their people if they had the right person in the right job. With no intention of returning to pre-recession workforce levels, employers have become more specific about the combination of skill sets that they are looking for, not only seeking technical capabilities in a job match, but also for the person that possesses the interpersonal and cultural fit that will drive their organization forward (Budhwar et al., 2006; Raman, Budhwar,& Balasubramanian, 2007).

Given this backdrop, vocational education and career planning in India has assumed critical importance in the last few years (Agarwal, 2009). Miller & Marvin, (2006) stated that the reality of the current economy is that the job market is more volatile and jobs are less permanent. The authors conducted a study to understand the importance of career planning among students and working professionals. They found out that majority of the individuals change jobs each year, and majority of them need some career planning assistance. The study also found out that the need for good career and labor market information for all age group is very important.

Career planning is the fundamental step in the course of career development, the process of general and vocational decision making (Gunket et al., 2010). Career theorists have agreed that to attain Career Decisiveness , the most desirable state of career decision making requires immense amount of planning and a level of career maturity (attitude and competency) that is characterized by an exploration of one's ability, knowledge of available careers, employment, and training opportunities (Gottfredson, 1981). In such a situation, it becomes a matter of concern to understand and investigate the factors that foster adequate career planning skills among individuals . At the same time also assess the positive consequences of having Career Planning skills . With the help of this kind of study, one could understand the factors that are required to make effective career choices . Such a study would be helpful to career counselors in providing career related to guidance to individuals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

MST and Career Planning attitudes (CA,CO, PJK)
Gutteridge (1973) noted that without a career plan, individuals often become discouraged with their career progress and disillusioned with their job situations. In particular, the threat of personal obsolescence, as documented by Bridges (1994), makes Career Planning particularly important to business professionals and managers. In a global economy driven by technological change, the average business school graduate can expect to change jobs seven or eight times (Bolles, 2002; Peters, 1999).

Clearly, students will be required to take more responsibility for their own career development and to learn the competencies necessary to manage the career planning process successfully (Ball, 1997; Ball & Jordan, 1997).Empirical field research, studies at the college level, and the popular Career Development literature all support the importance of systematic career planning as a prelude to successful job searches and long-term career management (Broscio & Paulick, 2003; Folsom & Reardon, 2003).

Gould's (1979) study of 277 managers and professionals provides an early example of the empirical literature. He found that individuals with the most successful careers (based on salary and position level) reported more extensive career planning.

Considering the same need, Rottinghaus, Day and Borgen (2005) developed and validated a new 25-item measure of positive career planning attitudes called Career Future inventory (CFI). Results from a sample of 690 undergraduates from a large mid-western university revealed three subscales: Career Adaptability, Career Optimism, and Perceived Knowledge. Career daptability (CA) was defined as the way an individual views his or her capacity to cope with and capitalize on change in the future, level of comfort with new work responsibilities, and ability to recover when unforeseen events alter career plans. Career Optimism (CO) was defined as a disposition to expect the best possible outcome or to emphasize the most positive aspects of one's future career development, and comfort in performing career planning tasks.3. Perceived Knowledge of Job Market (PJK) assessed perceptions of how well an individual understands job market and employment trends.

Motivational Systems theory (MST) was built upon the theory of individuals as self-constructing living systems (Ford, 1987) and is based on an integrative review of motivational theories (Hirschi, 2009). MST proposed that thriving and achievement was facilitated by the interaction of goals, capability beliefs, context beliefs, and emotions (Ford & Smith,2007). Goals, are thoughts about desired and undesired potential future states; In case of career oriented studies representation of goals has been in many forms. In the career development domain, several studies have revealed that goals impact career planning variables like career maturity, career adaptability (Hirschi and Läge, 2007; Creed, et al., 2005;). Capability beliefs find their relevance from Bandura 's (1967) concept of self efficacy. Essentially, they are whatever the person is thinking about when they consider whether they have what it takes to successfully accomplish a goal. Studies have shown individuals with greater career decision making self efficacy are more prepared and concerned about their career (Roger et al., 2008; Creed et al., 2006; Creed et al., 2004). Context beliefs are evaluative thinking about a goal which may also reflect judgments about whether elements of the context are likely to facilitate or constrain efforts to make progress toward that goal. (Ford and Smith 2007; Ford 1987). In case of career related studies they are generally summarized as how supportive one's environment is perceived to be in terms of available social support and opportunities. This aspect is mostly accounted for by perceived social support (Hirschi 2009; Knoack et al 2008).

Emotions are complexly organized patterns of several psychological and biological processes, including an affective (neural–psychological) component (Ford, 1994). In the context of career related studies, it is mostly operationalized as positive emotional disposition or better termed as optimism (Creed et al., 2002; Hirschi, 2009). Optimism was defined as a generalized tendency to expect positive outcomes (Scheier and Carver, 1993). A number of studies had investigated optimism in the career area (Creed et al., 2002; Patton et al., 2002). Studies found that students who endorsed higher levels of Optimism showed greater career planning and exploration, were more decided about their career and had more career goals, while those high in pessimism (reverse of optimism) reported less career knowledge, were more indecisive and achieved more poorly academically).

There are various advantages of using MST in case of career orientation studies. In case of career choice or career decisiveness, it is important to explore self and the environment. Super (1957). MST provides an appropriate theoretical lens to understand the same.It enables one to assess the effect of different socio-demographic (social context) and human capital variables (goals, emotions and capability beliefs) collectively. MST provides all the three aspects in the form of Capability beliefs (Personality factor), Optimism (Cognitive factor), and Goals (Motivational factor). As such, it provides a more complete picture of possible predictors than if just single components (e.g., self-efficacy beliefs) were examined. 198

Career planning and Career Decisiveness

Career decisiveness has been identified as an important construct in the study of career decision making (e.g., Dickinson and Tokar, 2004; Osipow, 1999). It has been stated as an individual's certainty about the career decision (Osipow et al. 1987). The author defined career decision-making as the thought processes by which an individual integrates self-knowledge and occupational knowledge arrive at an occupational choice. It is in fact a complex process involving a range of processes, and a lot of phases or states. (Osipow, 1999). He further stated that the end state or result of which is Career Decisiveness..The exact reverse of career decisiveness is described as career indecision. Typically, career indecision simply has been defined as the presence of difficulty with making decisions. There is plethora of studies documenting the impact of career planning attitudes on career decisiveness.

Ganster and Lovell (1978) used a quasi-experimental design to assess the impact of career planning attitude on career decisiveness. The sample consisted of both students taking a business management class and students enrolled Career Courses in a career development seminar. Robinson (1995) reported on a pretest-posttest study of the effects of a career course on the career maturity of undergraduates. The measuring instrument was the Career Development Inventory (CDI; Super et al., 1981). Salter (2009) used a pre-posttest design to compare two different instructional approaches in a college career development course with 52 lower division students. A standard career course plan was used for one group and a special curriculum that included purposeful infusion of the five critical components (Brown & Krane, 2000) into course activities was developed for the other group. The outcome variables of interest were career decision making self-efficacy, career decidedness. Peng (2001) examined the effectiveness of two different career education courses on college freshmen career decidedness.

The study suggests that career education courses have a positive impact on career decision making. Gunkel, Schlaegel, Langella, Peluchette (2010) studied firstly the degree to which career adaptability, career optimism, and career knowledge predict career decisiveness in China, Germany, and the US; and secondly, the effect of the five personality traits on the determinants of career decisiveness, on career decisiveness. Similar work was done to understand the impact of career planning attitudes on career choices like Creed et al., 2009; hirschi 2009; Hirschi 2010Macilven et al., (2013);HirschiZiebel (2010);

RESEARCH GAPS

Following Are The Gaps Identified In The Literature

Given the positive impact of CFI (as a career planning attitude) on Career Decisiveness (as a proxy for Career Choice) , the existing literature has not paid adequate mention to this subject. Therefore there is a need and scope to explore the predictors of CFI .

The CFI scale development paper by Rottainghaus et al., (2005) provides impetus to conduct more research in the same field as very few studies have been done using the same scale, excepting the study by Gunkel et al., 2010, where the authors tried to understand the impact of CFI on Career Decisiveness. There has been hardly any study conducted to understand the antecedents of CO or PJK like CA.

Aspects like having a positive attitude about one's career or understanding the job market trends which are captured by the CO and PJK respectively are equally important for career decisiveness (Gunkel et al., 2010; Rottinghaus et al. , 2005; Santos, 2003; Savikas 1997 ;Schiever et al., 1985).

When examining the antecedents of career choice, both the personal and contextual dimensions need to be considered (Hirschi, 2009; Creed et al 2006; Savikas, 1997;. Super, 1957). However most of the earlier studies on career choice, had not looked into all the aspects of individual and contextual factors together -for e.g.- oal orientation and social support (Creed et al.,2009) ; goal instability (Creed et al., 2011; Santos, 2003) ; goals orientation , social support and self efficacy , (Hirschi et al ., 2010) social support and self efficacy (Hirschi et al., 2010) social support (Choi et al., 2012 Noacke et al., 2010: Hurtington et al., 2002).

The studies that investigated the individual factor on career choice has mostly used either personality traits (Gunkel et al., 2010; Hirschi et al., 2010) or motivational factors in the form of Goal orientation or Goal decidedness (Creed et al ., 2011; Creed et al., 2009;Santos 2003) or cognitive style in the form of Optimism (Creed et al., 2006;Patton et al., 2004; Creed et al., 2002) singularly.

Studies using Social Cognitive Career theoretical framework like (Roger et al., 2008; Creed et al., 2006; Creed et al ., 2005; Patton et al.,2004, have used all the aspects of individual and contextual factors in making career choice . Despite this these studies were found valid only when the study design was cross- sectional - Roger et al., 2008; Creed et al.,2005; Patton et al., 2004. Findings from a study by Creed, et al. (2006) on high school students in Australia were less supportive of the process model of SCCT. The authors suggested that a causal linkage between the two variables as hypothesized by the SCCT process did not hold valid.

Early self-efficacy status might not buffer a person from future career decision-making conflicts, so SCCT model will not hold valid in case of longitudinal studies (Hirschi et al. 2009; Leung 2008).So in such a case Motivational Systems Theory provides an ideal theoretical lens as it captures both human capital (personality-capability beliefs , motivational factor-goal decidedness, cognitive style- optimism) and contextual factors (social context beliefs) in a holistic fashion. However, very few studies have used MST to understand Career Decisiveness, except the work done by Hirschi, (2009). Literature was found stating that the process of career choice is not the same across nations. The relative influence of various factors on the career choice of students has been found to vary across cultures (Agarwala 2008; Ozbilgin et al., 2005). Aspects of CA, CO and PJK had different impact on different countries (Gunkel., 2010) . In such a given situation, a study especially in a collectivist culture needs to be conducted. (Choi et al.,2010;Lee 2007;).

Summarizing the various gaps addressed above, following are the objectives of the study

> - To examine the relationships of the various MST dimensions with the CFI dimensions.
> - To examine the relationship of CFI dimensions and career decisiveness.

PROPOSITIONS

Relationship Between Optimism and Career Adaptability

Optimism is commonly associated with two of the Big-Five personality traits, namely emotional stability and extraversion (Costa and McCrae, 1997). Neuroticism is mainly characterized by anxiety, though self consciousness, impulsiveness, and vulnerability are also meaningful components.

Often, Neuroticism is measured through its inverse, Emotional Stability or Resilience, which is the overall level of adjustment in the face of stress and pressure (Lounsburyet al.,, 2004). Extraversion is defined primarily by a tendency towards being outwardly expressive - containing facets related to gregariousness (i.e., Friendliness, Cheerfulness, Sociability), but also has facets related to dominance and energy (i.e., Activity Level, Excitement Seeking, Assertiveness) (Hastings and O'Neill, 2009). Research implies that a more favourable emotional disposition in terms of emotional stability and extraversion is related to more career planning and exploration among adolescents (Rogers et al., 2008; Hirschi et al., 2010). Individuals who have a high positive effect will be more flexible to changes in career plan. Gunkel et al., (2010) found that emotional stability is negatively related to Career Optimism, Career Adaptability (Rottinghaus et al., 2005) while checking convergent and discriminant validity of CFI, related the dimensions of emotional stability and extraversion with CFI dimensions. Again Hirschi (2009) related emotions with Career Adaptability. On the basis of the above observation, the following hypotheses are framed:

> **P1A. Individuals having greater Optimism will have greater Career Adaptability.**
> **P1B. Individuals having greater Optimism will have greater Career Adaptability**

Relationship Among Self Efficacy , Career Adaptability, Career Optimism And Perceived Knowledge Of The Job Market

Studies have shown that conscientious individuals report higher levels of self-efficacy for a wide variety of tasks (Colquitt and Simmering, 1998; Gellatly, 1996; Martocchio and Judge, 1997).

It was found that higher self efficacy promote the development of adolescent career adaptability (e.g., Patton et al., 2004;Creed, , Prideaux et al., 2005; Hirschi 2009) and also other career planning measures. Hirschi et al., (2010) showed that conscientiousness may be related to certain vocational behaviors, e.g. Occupational interest, career indecision, and job satisfaction. They further state that this dimension relates to the career exploration variables such as self-exploration, career information seeking, stress regarding career exploration, and career search self-efficacy. Individuals who are high on self efficacy would be more optimistic about their careers and would be very open to changes in career plan as they believe in their potential. At the same time such individuals would be constantly seeking information about the job market and employment trends. Based on the above observations, following hypotheses can be framed:

> **P2 A. Individuals having greater Self efficacy will have greater Career Adaptability.**
> **P2 B. Individuals having greater Self efficacy will have greater Career Optimism.**
> **P3 C. Individuals having greater Self efficacy will have greater Perceived Knowledge of the Job Market.**

Relationship among Perceived social support, Career Adaptability and Career Optimism

Research showed that perceived support from the social environment is crucial for successful adolescent vocational preparation. Involvement of family, peers, network, and teachers have been related to Career Exploration among high school students (Karke, 2010).

The role of social context becomes more important in collectivist cultures as cited by most career researchers (Choi, et al, 2010). Researchers have investigated both personal and environmental factors to explain differences in individual career development. In particular, fixed family factors (e.g., socioeconomic status , parent education level) have been included with personal variables in an effort to focus on the important role families play in adolescent career development (Hurtung et al 2002; Creed and Patton, 2003; Friedman et al., 2003; Hirschi, 2009). Thus observing the above findings, the following hypothesis is framed suited for the Indian context mostly-

> ➤ **P3 A. Individuals Having Greater Perceived Social Support Will Have Greater Career Adaptability.**
> ➤ **P3 B. Individuals Having Greater Perceived Social Support Will Have Greater Career Optimism.**

Relationship among Goal Decidedness, Career Adaptability, and Perceived Knowledge of the Job Market

Goals are explained, in terms of career goal decidedness and specification. Goal clarity was related to more career exploration and planning in other studies with adolescents (Santos 2003; Rogers et al., 2008). Individuals who are likely to set higher career related goals and engage in more career planning and exploration. Again Creed et al., (2011) using a longitudinal study examined the relationship between goal orientation and career aspiration As a result they are more focused and hence would attain more information about the market, and more likely to be flexible in case of career plans .On the basis of the above observation, the following hypotheses are framed:

> ➤ **P4 A. Individuals having greater Goal decidedness will greater higher Career Adaptability.**
> ➤ **P4B. Individuals having greater Goal decidedness will have greater Perceived Knowledge of the Job Market.**

Relationship Among Career Adaptability, And Career Optimism, Perceived Knowledge Of The Job Market And Career Decisiveness.

Career adaptability, Career Optimism and Career knowledge of job market appear to be an essential basis for successful career planning (Rottinghaus et al. 2005; Gunkel et al 2010). These factors have been found to be correlated with other career planning tools like career exploration, career identity (Rottinghaus et al., 2005).

Again successful career planning has been stated as the primary factor impacting career decisiveness (Gunkel et al., 2010).

> ➤ **P5 A. Individuals having greater Career Adaptability will have greater Career Decisiveness.**
> ➤ **P5 B. Individuals having greater Career Optimism will have greater Career Decisiveness**
> ➤ **P5 C. Individuals having greater Perceived Knowledge of the Job Market will have greater Career Decisiveness.**

CONCLUSION

The current study will identify the factors that foster positive career planning attitude and its impact on career decisiveness looking at the motivational systems theory using a longitudinal study design. Because of usage of a longitudinal study design and MST, both process and content theories of career would be incorporated as cited by various career theorists. As a result of which the study would add to the current body of literature on career theory by providing a holistic view on both individual and contextual factors on career choice using a process approach to career theory. Again under the individual factors personality (Capabilty beliefs), cognitive style (optimism) and motivational factors (goal decidedness) would be incorporated.

As a result , it would help to forecast which factors foster effective career planning attitudes. Again which particular dimension of CFI- CA, C, PJK impacts career decisiveness most. Since the study would be conducted in India, this would also look at the applicability of Motivational systems theory in the Indian context.   Results could prove useful to those who are involved in developing and administering programs for career planning and development, whether in colleges and universities, employment agencies, or corporations. Appropriate support could be provided for students in order to strengthen their adaptability and knowledge about careers, which would result in a higher optimism and career decisiveness. This is especially important given the current economic downturn and the pessimistic media coverage about the job market.

BIODATA and CIONTACT ADDRESS of the AUTHOR

Srabasti CHATTERJEE

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