

## Use Of Career Strategies, Satisfactions And Psychological Well-Being Among Women Managers And Professionals In Turkey

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## Use Of Career Strategies, Satisfactions And Psychological Well-Being Among Women Managers And Professionals In Turkey\*

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### Abstract

*The concept of career self-management gained currency in the early 1980s. It proposed that individuals could use career strategies to influence their career progress. Empirical support for this proposition has been low or mixed. The present study examines the relationship of use of career strategies and work and well-being outcomes in a sample of 143 women managers and professionals working in Istanbul Turkey. The vast majority worked in the public sector. Respondents indicated only limited use of these career strategies. Hierarchical regression analyses, controlling for both personal demographics and work situation characteristics were undertaken to determine the relationship of use of various career strategies and these outcomes. Use of career strategies had no relationship with any of our outcome measures. It may be that use of career strategies is more likely to be associated with work and well-being outcomes among women who are career oriented and work in organizational cultures more supportive of women and their career prospects.*

**Key words:** Career, Career Strategies, Well-being, Satisfaction

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## Introduction

The concept of career self-management started receiving both practical and research attention in the early 1980s (Hall, 1976, 1996). It suggested that individuals were more likely to advance their careers (e, g., be promoted) if they engaged in behaviours identified as career strategies (Gould & Penley, 1984). Gould and Penley identified seven career strategies based on their review of the career self-management writing. These were: creating career opportunities, extending work involvement, self-nomination/self-presentation, seeking career guidance, networking, opinion conformity and other means of enhancing or ingratiating oneself with one's manager. Since then, researchers have begun to investigate correlates of career strategies and their use.

Gould and Penley (1984) developed a measure of use of these career strategies and considered the relationship between their use and career progress. They reported, based on respondents working in the public sector, that managers made greater use of career strategies than did non-managers, and managers promoted in their careers made greater use of them than did managers who had not. Males and females were generally similar though females indicated a greater use of seeking guidance from others and males made greater use of extending their work investment by working harder and longer. Their respondents worked in the public sector.

McKeen and Burke (1993) investigated use of career strategies in a large sample of Canadian managerial and professional women. This sample did not use the Gould and Penley career strategies very often. Few demographic and work situation characteristics were associated with use of them as well. But managerial and professional women using more career strategies indicated higher levels of job and career satisfaction and job involvement.

Burke, Divinagracia and Mamo (1998)

considered use of these career strategies in a sample of 200 Filipino managerial and professional women working in a variety of industries. These women made considerable use of these strategies, making greater use of those internal than external to their organization. Women using more career strategies worked more extra hours per week and took part in more training and development activities. In addition, these women were more satisfied with their careers and indicated more optimistic future career prospects.

But other studies have shown no relationship between use of career strategies and careers success. Yean and Yahya (2008), in a study of 185 employees from a Malaysian manufacturing organization, reported almost no relationship, using a measure of career strategies developed by Lau and Pang (2000). Abraham (2011) found, in a sample of employees in Indian banks, only a weak relationship of use of career strategies and career outcomes, using a measure of career strategies that she created for the research. And Noe (1996, in an Americans study, reported no relationship between employee use of career management strategies and manager's ratings of their job performance.

Thus research evidence on the relationship of use of career strategies and various subjective and objective indicators of career success is mixed. Possible explanations for these mixed results include studies being conducted in countries having different values and beliefs about women and work, different values and beliefs about self-promotion by women, and different levels of overall support for women in the workplace,. Studies involving women managers and professionals have reported both high use of career strategies in the Phillines (Burke, Divinagracia & Mamo, 1998) and low use of these same career strategies in Canada (McKeen & Burke, 1993).

Morrison, White and Van Velsor (1987, 1992) noted that managerial and professional women in their American samples could not be too assertive in promoting themself-

ves. In addition, women have made greater progress in both entering managerial and professional jobs and have achieved more upward mobility in some countries than in others (Davidson & Burke, 2004, 2011) so the context for women's use of career strategies likely differs as well. It is not clear how these factors would affect both the use of career strategies by women and their potential benefits.

### Woman in management in Turkey

This study examined the relationship of the use of career strategies and work and psychological well-being outcomes in a sample of managerial and professional women in Turkey. There has been both reviews on the status of women in Turkey (Kabasakal,

Aycan, Karakas & Maden, 2011; Kabasakal, Aycan & Karakas, 2004; United Nations Development Programme, 2008) as well as a small but growing body of research findings (Aycan, 2004; Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Ufek & Ozgen, 2001; Koyuncu, Burke & Fiksenbaum, 2006; Burke, Koyuncu & Fiksenbaum, 2008; Ozbilgin & Woodward, 2004; Woodward & Ozbilgin, 1999).

The reviews are particularly informative. The work of Kabasakal and her colleagues (2004, 2011) indicates slow progress of women's advancement into both the workforce and in managerial and professional positions. There are an increasing number of women entering universities but women still concentrate in areas of study that have been typically seen as feminine avoiding the sciences technology and business. Government legislation exists to support the advancement of women but it is not clear the extent to which this legislation is enforced. Government organizations offer training for women in fields such as entrepreneurship. Women have fared particularly well in some professions such as education and university professorships. Private sector organizations, however, rarely undertake initiatives that target the selection, development and ad-

vancement of women. In a comparison of thirteen countries, a United Nations Development Programme (2008) study showed that Turkey ranked last in the number of positions held by women in management, as legislators, and as union officials.

### Objectives of the research

This study considered the use of career strategies and indicators of work and career satisfaction and psychological well-being in a sample of Turkish managerial and professional women.

Two general hypotheses, building on previous work, were examined in this research.

1. *Female managers and professionals reporting greater use of career strategies would report higher levels of work satisfaction.*

2. *Female managers and professionals reporting greater use of career strategies would report higher levels of psychological well-being*

### Method

#### Procedure

Four organizations located in Istanbul Turkey were contacted, the purpose of the study explained, and access to women holding full time managerial and professional jobs was requested. Data were collected using anonymously completed questionnaires. The four institutions were: the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the Istanbul Commodity Exchange (ICE), the Foreign Economic Relations Board (FERB) and the Economic Development Foundation (EDF). Each of these organizations has a board of directors made up mainly of men and they provide services to the business community. All respondents held jobs offering opportunities for promotion and were at various organizational levels (e. g., executive, director, managers, auditors, inspectors, content experts, and consultants. Respondents in the first two organizations (ICC, ICE received hard copies of the questionnaire, respondents in the other two organizations (FERB, EDF) received the questionnaire electroni-

cally. Data were collected in September through November 2011. A total of 210 females were invited to participate and 143 did so, a response rate of 68 percent. Most respondents were employed with the ICC (79%).

### Respondents

Table 1 presents demographic characteristics of the sample (N=143). Most were between 31 and 40 years of age (49%), about half were married (50%), about half had children (51%) Most had a Bachelor's degree

(53%), worked 40 hours per week (68%), most earned between US\$15,000 and US\$21,999 per week (43%), were in lower management (36%), had supervisory duties (78%), worked in the public sector (92%), had been working for their organization 5 years or less (32%) and in their present jobs between 3 to 5 years (32%), had 6 to 10 subordinates (34%), and worked in organizations over 100 people (78%), these respondents working for the same large public sector organization.

**Table 1**  
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

<u>Age</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
30 or younger	40	28.0	Married, cohabiting	72	50.3
31 – 40	70	48.9	Single	71	49.7
41 – 50	28	19.6			
51 or older	5	3.5	<u>Education</u>		
			High school	24	16.8
<u>Parental status</u>			Bachelors	76	53.1
Have children	73	51.1	Masters	43	30.1
No children	70	48.9			
			<u>Income</u>		
<u>Work hours</u>			\$ 15.000 or less	21	14.7
39 or less	5	3.5	\$ 15.000 - \$ 21.999	62	43.4
40	97	67.8	\$ 22.000 - \$ 28.999	32	22.4
41 – 50	39	25.3	\$ 29.000 or more	28	19.6
51 or more	2	1.4			
			<u>Organizational level</u>		
<u>Organizational tenure</u>			Non-management	32	22.4
5 years or less	46	32.2	Lower management	52	36.4
6 – 10	34	23.7	Middle management	49	32.9
11 – 15	34	23.8	Senior management	12	8.4
16 – 20	12	6.4			
21 or more	17	11.9	<u>Supervisory duties</u>		
			Yes	111	77.6
<u>Job Tenure</u>			No	32	22.4
1 – 2 years	44	30.8			
3 – 5	46	32.1	<u>Sector</u>		
6 – 10	23	16.1	Private	11	7.7
11 – 20	23	16.1	Public	132	92.3
<u>Organization size</u>			<u>Number of subordinates</u>		
100 or less	31	22.4	0	32	32.4
100 or more	112	77.6	1 – 5	20	14.0
			6 – 10	34	33.7
			11 – 15	14	9.8
			16 – 20	14	9.8
			21 – 25	14	9.8
			26 or more	15	10.5

### Measures

*Personal demographics* (e.g., age, gender, education, marital and parental status) were measured by single items.

*Work situation characteristics* were also measured by single items. (sector, organizational level, organizational and job tenure, organizational size)

### Use of career strategies

Career strategies was measured by an eight item scale ( $\alpha=.72$ ), the seven items from the original Gould and Penley (1984) measures with the addition of an eighth. Respondents indicated how often they had engaged in each career strategy during the past year (1=never, 3=occasionally; 5=always). Sample items included: "Worked harder when you knew the results would be seen by your superiors." And "Obtained broad based work experience in your organization."

### Work outcomes

Four work outcomes were included.

*Job satisfaction* was measured by six items ( $\alpha=.93$ ) developed by Kofodimos (1993). One item was "I feel challenged by my work."

*Career satisfaction* was assessed by three items ( $\alpha=.70$ ) developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley (1990). An item was "I am satisfied with the success I have had in my career" ..

*Career progress* was also measured by a three item scale ( $\alpha=.52$ ) developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley (1999). One item was "I have very good prospects for promotion in this organization."

*Intent to quit* was measured by two items ( $\alpha=.76$ ) used previously by Burke (1991). An item was "Are you currently looking for a different job in a different organization? (yes/no).

### Psychological well-being

Two aspects of psychological health were

included.

*Stress* was measured by a 9 item scale ( $\alpha=.80$ ) developed by Spence and Robbins (1992). Respondents indicated their agreement with each item on the same 5 point Likert scale. A sample item was "I am under a great deal of stress at work."

*Emotional exhaustion* was assessed by a 9 item scale ( $\alpha=.91$ ) developed by Maslach, Jackson and Leiter (1996) One item was "I feel emotionally drained from my work."

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

Table 2 shows the frequency of usage of each of the eight career strategies. Mean values ranged from a high of 3.9 (obtained broad based work experience in your organization) to a low of 2.4 (took work home with you, sought career guidance from experienced persons inside the organization, sought career guidance from experienced persons outside the organization) The total scores was 24.0, s.d.=5.59, n=135.. The mean value for all eight career strategies was 3.0 indicating only occasional use of them.

### Personal demographics, work situation characteristics and use of career strategies

Correlations were computed between thirteen personal demographic and work situation characteristics (e.g., age, level of education, income, marital status, job tenure, number of subordinates) and self-reported use of career strategies. Only two of these thirteen correlations (15%) reached statistical significance at the .05 level of confidence. Managerial and professional women who were more highly educated and earned more income made greater use of these career strategies ( $r_s=.29$  and  $.21$ , respectively).

### Hierarchical regression analyses

Hierarchical regression analyses were undertaken in which the various work and well-being outcomes were separately reg-

**Table 2**  
DUse of Career Strategies

Career Strategies	X	SD	Rank
1. Worked harder when results seen by superiors.	3.2	1.45	3
2. Contacts inside organization to obtain information.	3.6	.98	2
3. Obtained broad work experience	3.9	.93	1
4. Took work home.	2.4	1.24	6
5. Contacts outside organization to obtain information.	3.2	1.17	4
6. Made boss aware of wanted assignments.	2.7	1.17	5
7. Sought career guidance inside the organization.	2.4	1.20	7
8. Sought career guidance outside the organization.	2.4	1.30	8

Ns= 135 on use of each career strategy

ressed on three blocks of predictors. The first block of predictors included four personal demographic characteristics (age, marital status, parental status, level of education). The second block of predictors included four work situation characteristics: organizational level, supervisory duties, organizational tenure, and job tenure. The third block of predictors included the measure of use of career strategies. When a block of predictors accounted for a significant amount or increment in explained variance with a given outcome measure ( $p < .05$ ), individual items or measures within these blocks having significant and independent relationships with this outcome were then determined ( $p < .05$ ). This approach controls for the relationship of both personal demographics and work situation characteristics with a given outcome before considering the relationship of the predictors of interest, in this case the measures of work and family interference.

#### *Use of career strategies and work outcomes*

Table 3 presents the results of hierarchical regression analyses in which the four work outcomes were separately regressed

on the three blocks of predictors (personal demographics, work situation characteristics, career strategies). The following comments are offered in summary. Use of career strategies failed to account for a significant increase in explained variance in any of the four analyses. Managerial and professional women having shorter job tenures, and managerial and professional women at higher organizational levels, indicated higher levels of career satisfaction ( $Bs = -.29$  and  $.30$ , respectively).

#### *Use of career strategies and psychological well-being*

Table 4 shows the results of hierarchical regression analyses in which two indicators of psychological well-being were separately regressed on the three blocks of predictors. The following comments are offered in summary. Use of career strategies failed to account for a significant increment in explained variance on either indicator. Managerial and professional women having supervisory duties, and managerial and professional women at lower organizational levels reported higher levels of exhaustion ( $Bs = .42$  and  $-.30$ , respectively).

**Table 3**

## Use of Career Strategies and Work Outcomes

<u>Work Outcomes</u>				
<u>Job satisfaction (n=132)</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>R<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>ΔR<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>P</u>
Personal demographics	.21	.05	.05	NS
Work situation characteristics	.34	.12	.07	.05
Career strategies	.35	.12	.00	NS
<u>Career satisfaction (n=133)</u>				
Personal demographics	.18	.03	.03	NS
Work situation characteristics	.36	.13	.10	.05
Job tenure (-.29)				
Organizational level (.30)				
Career strategies	.36	.13	.00	NS
<u>Career prospects (n=133)</u>				
Personal demographics	.19	.04	.04	NS
Work situation characteristics	.30	.09	.05	NS
Career strategies	.30	.09	.00	NS
<u>Intent to quit (n=135)</u>				
Personal demographics	.22	.05	.05	NS
Work situation characteristics	.25	.06	.01	NS
Career strategies	.26	.07	.01	NS

**Table 4**

## Use of Career Strategies and Psychological Well-Being

<u>Psychological Well-being</u>				
<u>Exhaustion (n=128)</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>R<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>ΔR<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>P</u>
Personal demographics	.16	.03	.03	NS
Work situation characteristics	.33	.11	.08	.05
Supervisory duties (.42)				
Organizational level (-.30)				
Career strategies	.35	.12	.01	NS
<u>Stress(n=130)</u>				
Personal demographics	.22	.04	.04	NS
Work situation characteristics	.27	.07	.03	NS
Career strategies	.27	.07	.00	NS

## Discussion

Our findings failed to provide support for our two hypotheses. Use of career strategies in a sample of managerial and professional women Turkey, mostly employed in the public sector, was unrelated to both work outcomes and indicators of psychological health (see Tables 3 and 4). In addition, the sample as a whole made relatively little /low use of these career strategies, on average, using them only occasionally.

We can only speculate as to why this occurred. Some possible explanations would include: the sample on the whole made relatively little use of the career strategies investigated here, the vast majority of women in the sample worked in the public sector which may have had other factors as being important to career success and progress (e.g., seniority), the sample in general was not particularly interested in career advancement-most working 40 hours per week,

Interestingly, other research has also found low or limited support for uses of a variety of career strategies and different work and career outcomes (Abraham, 2011; Noe, 1996; Yean & Yahya, 2008)

## Limitations of the research

This study, typical of most research, has some limitations. First, all data were collected using self-report questionnaires raising the possibility of response set tendencies. Second, all data were collected at one point in time making it impossible to consider cause and effect relationships. Third, some of the measures had levels of internal consistency reliabilities slightly below the generally accepted standard of .70. Fourth, the sample contained mostly women working in the public sector; in addition this sample may not be reflective of all women working in the public sector. Fifth, there may be other career strategies more relevant to women in management in Turkey than the ones identified in the American study (Gould & Penley, 1984)

## Future research directions

Several promising future research directions can be identified. First, a qualitative study using interviews and/or focus groups of Turkish managerial and professional women might identify additional career strategies that fit their personal circumstances, culture and workplaces, which ones they have used and why they did not use others. Second, it seems important to determine the career aspirations of these managerial women. Career strategies are more likely to be used by women interested in career advancement. A related research effort might be focussed on women that have in fact achieved more senior executive levels in their organizations. Perhaps sampling women in the private sector would also prove enlightening. Finally, considering culture and country differences in values might serve to indicate the context in which use of career strategies would be associated with career progress and those in which use of career strategies would not.

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