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A STUDY ON CAREER COMPETENCY: LITERATURE SURVEY AND RESEARCH AGENDA

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ABSTRACT

Understanding career competency is essential for advancing one's professional career, as it provides direction and insight into the path to pursue and the requirements for achieving career progression and fulfillment. The purpose of this research is to understand and identify the career competencies practiced by individuals to advance in their careers. This study basically discusses boundary less career perspective to understand the concept of career competencies, focusing on know-why, know-how, and know-whom competencies. Furthermore, various concepts such as intelligent career concept, protean career concept, career self-management concept, and human capital concept are discussed to comprehend career competency. We aim to encourage additional discourse, investigation, and the creation of interventions in the realm of career advancement. In addition, we provide a research agenda in this area of study.

KEYWORDS: *Career Competency, Boundary Less Career Perspective, Know-Why Competency, Know-How Competency, Know-Whom Competency*

INTRODUCTION

Career is typically understood as the evolution of an individual's work experiences over time(Arthur et al., 1989; Gunz & Peiperl, 2007). Initially, career development was commonly perceived as a straightforward trajectory involving prolonged tenure within a specific domain within an organization, awaiting career advancement through accrued experience(Defillippi & Arthur, 1994; Eby et al., 2003). In recent decades, there has been a noticeable trend towards increasingly dynamic careers, marked by employees' advancement through lateral moves across various organizations (Arnold & Cohen, 2008; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). The advancement of technology and increased competition has reshaped the career landscape from a sequential progression to a more flexible "career lattice" model. This model allows employees to explore diverse career opportunities by assuming various roles and traversing different areas within the organization. This dynamic approach to career advancement has gained prominence, characterized by individuals crafting their career trajectories through lateral transitions across multiple organizations(Akkermans et al., 2013; Arnold & Cohen, 2008; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996).

Careers, acknowledging that continuous tenure within a single organization is not assured anymore(Kuijpers et al., 2006; Park, 2020). In the evolving employment landscape of the present era, individuals require career competencies to

secure, sustain employment, enabling them to effectively navigate their career trajectories(Heijde & Van Der Heijden, 2006). The individual bears the responsibility for their career development, necessitating the acquisition and investment in career competencies, such as skills, aptitudes, and interactions crucial for achieving successful work performance (Colakoglu, 2011). Individuals in the knowledge economy must adopt a proactive stance rather than assuming a subordinate role to the organizations they work for(Beigi et al., 2018; Colakoglu, 2011; Defillippi & Arthur, 1994; Sung-Min Ahn & Chan-Wook Park, 2016; Suutari & Makela, 2007)

Previous study emphasized the significance of career competency in achieving career advancement and achieving success(Akkermans et al., 2013; Eby et al., 2008; Kuijpers et al., 2006; Kuijpers & Scheerens, 2006; Talluri et al., 2024). Career competencies are believed to be pivotal in sustaining an employee's relevance and value to the organization (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Yet, the precise knowledge and skills needed for individuals to realize their potential in advancing their careers remain unclear, including the competencies they need to acquire.

CONCEPT OF CAREER COMPETENCY

Concept of career competency was emerged during Career Pattern Study of Crites model of Vocational Maturity(Crites, 1961, 1965). According toCrites (1961, 1965, 1978) the career maturity model comprises four fundamental aspects: "*Consistency in career choices*" (reflecting alignment over time, across different fields, and at various stages of a person's professional journey); "*Realism of career choices*", (which assesses how well they correspond to a person'spersonality traits, interest, abilities, and social class); "*Career choice competencies*," (encompassing self-assessment, goal setting, planning, occupational knowledge, and problem-solving); and "*Career choice attitudes*," (which include involvement, orientation, independence, decisiveness, and compromise). As a result of this study, five career choice competencies; "*knowing yourself*" (self-assessment or self-evaluation); "*knowing about job*" (insights about various occupations, including job roles, responsibilities, requirements, qualifications, working conditions, career prospects, and related information); "*choosing a job*" (A consequential choice that can deeply influence multiple facets of your life, encompassing career contentment, financial security, personal fulfillment, and overall welfare); "*looking ahead*" (act of considering future possibilities, opportunities, challenges, and goals); and "*what should they do*" (problem solving) (Crites, 1973a, 1978).

Organizations must constantly adjust to the evolving market and demands. This adaptive journey necessitates a growing flexibility within the workforce, aligning job skills with emerging needs. There were some ways to improve the adjustment and the adaptive capacity of workforce Thus, the concept of career competency has surfaced as a method to enhancethe adaptive capacity of the workforce. The workforce can enhance its ability to adjust and adapt by developing career competencies, which are crucial for facilitating this adaptive process. Defillippi and Arthur (1994) introduced three career competencies in their boundaryless career perspective that aid in this adaptive process (Akkermans et al., 2013).

Boundaryless Career Perspective

According to Defillippi and Arthur (1994)individuals' career advancement is not confined to a single organization. Instead, it extends beyond one organization, with individuals transitioning across multiple organizations to develop their careers(Arnold & Cohen, 2008; Defillippi & Arthur, 1994). In other words, Career progression isn't limited to one organization, occupation, or industry; rather, it encompasses a series of job opportunities that extend beyond the confines of a single employment setting(Eby et al., 2003). The most recognized feature of this perspective is mobility, which denotes the

movement of professionals across various areas within an organization and through multiple organizations. Individuals actively seek opportunities to advance and transition across multiple organizations, occupations, and even industries.

Defillippi and Arthur, (1994)propose that a boundaryless career facilitates the accumulation of three fundamental sets of career competencies to build an individual's career. These professions offer chances for individuals to consistently refine and improve their competencies as they navigate through various organizational environments, roles, and encounters. Furthermore, the career competencies are the by-product of boundaryless career. This accumulation of competencies not only contributes to individual career growth and success but also enables individuals to make valuable contributions to organizations by bringing diverse perspectives, skills, and networks (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994). Accordingly, competency acquisition through a boundaryless career can significantly enhance the unfolding of a firm's competency. Defillippi and Arthur (1994) propose three fundamental sets of career competencies, namely "know-why", "know-how", and "know-whom" in response to the competency-based perspective of firms. This perspective signifies the integration of employees' collective competencies with the organization's past and current undertakings, thereby shaping future strategic opportunities (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994; Grant, 1991; Hall, 1992; Nelson & Winter, 1982; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990; Teece, 2004).

A fundamental aspect of the boundaryless careers perspective involves the competencies associated with it. Viewed as a progression of an individual's work experiences, each career entails the acquisition of diverse forms of knowledge, with the trajectory of the career being shaped by the sequence of knowledge acquisition (Mendenhall, 2001). These competencies are crucial for individuals to effectively build and advance their careers within and across multiple organizations. "Know-why", "know-how", and "know-whom" career competencies are basically represents career relevant values, skills, and social networks respectively and are derivatives of firm-based competencies such as culture, expertise, and networks respectively (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994). They considered these three individual career competencies to be reflections of the firm's collective competencies.

Know-Why Competency

The know-why competency basically encompasses career-related values, relating to 'career motivation', 'personal meaning', and 'identification' (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994). It reflects the firm's competency 'culture' that represents the organization's core mission and values. The 'know-why' competency is responsible for initiating motivation toward assigned work and seeking personal significance in that work. This personal significance enables individuals in adjusting and adapting within the given work environment. Subsequently Arthur et al., (1995) renamed this competency to "Knowing-why" competency. This competency involves an individual's motivation to understand themselves, pursue diverse opportunities, and adapt to continuously changing work environments (Arthur et al., 1999). Furthermore, it also empowers individuals to separate their personal identity and affiliations with their employer, allowing them to remain open to new opportunities and professional growth(Arthur et al., 1999; Mirvis & Hall, 1994).This includes an individual's motivation and self-awareness, encompassing their personality traits, self-perception, inclinations, interests, and values, all dedicated to pursuing their career path.

Weick and Berlinger, (2010) encourage individuals within contemporary adaptive organizations to disassociate their identities from the roles and work environments they engage with. Mirvis and Hall (1994)align 'psychological success' with individuals' capacity to comprehend the ever-evolving nature of their work tasks and to integrate their professional experiences into a cohesive 'self-image'.

Know- How Competency

The Know-how competency primarily focuses on expertise pertinent to the job and skills relevant to one's career, as well as the underlying factors of how individuals enhance a firm's comprehensive capabilities (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994). It reflects the firm's competency 'expertise' that represents the organization's overall capabilities and expertise. The Know-how competencies entail the expertise and knowledge essential for effective task execution, with particular emphasis on competencies transferable across different contexts. Arthur et al., (1995)renamed this competency to "Knowing-how" competency. This refers to expertise and information pertinent to one's career and job, gradually building up and enriching both the organization's and the individual's reservoir of knowledge (Arthur et al., 1999). The initial focus lies in cultivating a versatile and extensive skill set that can be applied across organizational borders. Furthermore, there is a focus on occupational learning as opposed to solely job-specific learning (Defillippi & Arthur, 1996). Investments in knowing-how competencies also blend explicit knowledge, such as what is acquired through courses or instruction books, with tacit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Tacit knowledge refers to what we understand but cannot explicitly articulate (Polanyi, 1962), as exemplified in numerous craft occupations. Additionally, the modern employment landscape highlights the internet as a platform for both acquiring and sharing knowledge (Castells, 2002). According to Noe et al. (1990) it pertains to the *'directional aspect of career motivation'*. As a result, those with a well-defined sense of career identity tend to invest time and effort in improving skills and competencies, thus augmenting their value within the organization and in external contexts (Arthur et al., 1999). This concept contrasts with knowing-why competencies as it prioritizes seizing opportunities through skills relevant to the profession and professional development, rather than focusing on self-reflection or a broad receptiveness to novel experiences

Know- Whom Competency

The Know-whom competency basically focus on career-relevant networks (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994). It reflects the firm's competency 'networks' that represents the firm's relationships with suppliers, customers, and other business entities. There are three primary advantages of participating in network activities underscored by the competency-based perspective of firms; Firstly, networks serve as valuable resource, enabling firms to leverage the specialized knowledge of other entities(Reed & DeFillippi, 1990); Secondly, networks serve as repositories of established prestige, facilitating the arrival of new business prospects (Lado et al., 1992); thirdly, networks serve as centres for learning, thereby strengthening competitive advantage(Powell, 1990).

The Know-whom competencies involve the development of professional relationship networks over one's career. Arthur et al. (1995) renamed this competency to "knowing-whom". It is social networks and connections (Arthur et al., 1999), involving relationships with other stakeholders for the organization and personal connections (Parker et al., 2004), which influence individuals' contributions to inter-firm communication(Krackhardt, 1992), and the diverse strategies individuals can employ to utilize their network. The Knowing-whom further facilitates connecting with new contacts and potential professional prospects (Defillippi & Arthur, 1996). Nurturing this competency leads to the formation of "career communities" and "networks" that provide platforms for career assistance and personal growth(Parker et al., 2004).

Intelligent Career Concept

The Intelligent career concept, concerning the accumulation of career competencies for career advancement, emerged from the boundaryless career perspective (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994), but the term "intelligent career theory" was first introduced by Arthur et al. (1995). The terms "know-why", "know-how" and "know-whom" competency were changed to

"knowing-why", "knowing-how", and "knowing-whom" competency respectively that simply known as "ways of knowing" (Arthur et al., 1995). According to this concept, individuals strategically invest in their careers through three primary ways of knowing, namely, "knowing-why," "knowing-how," and "knowing-whom"(Arthur et al., 1995).These three dimensions enable us to assess an individual's role in the knowledge-driven economy without limiting their career to any specific organization(Parker et al., 2009). These three ways are explained in the previous section of this paper.

Protean Career Perspective

Hall, (1976), describes individual with a protean career as one who keeps updating their career path to stay relevant at work. The term "protean" derives from "Proteus," a Greek deity renowned for his ability to constantly change his form in response to his surroundings. Therefore, being protean entails being adaptable, flexible, and versatile to adjust within the given work environment. Regarding career development, someone with a protean career is always evaluating themselves, setting their own path, and growing (Hall, 1976, 1996; Mirvis & Hall, 1994). Because they're flexible, they can grab new opportunities as they come, try out different industries, and keep changing what success means to them, based on how work is changing. Being 'protean' is about having an attitude that gives you this kind of flexibility and versatility (Hall, 2004; Mirvis & Hall, 1994).

The protean career concept primarily emphasizes two key aspects of an individual's career: firstly, self-directed behavior in making career choices; and secondly, intrinsic values that guide career decisions based on intrinsic value(Hall et al., 2018). These aspects are integral to initiating psychological success in terms of subjective career satisfaction (Hall et al., 2018; Mirvis & Hall, 1994).

Protean careers represent a mindset and attitude embraced by an individual, while boundaryless careers are the tangible results that emerge from adopting the protean mindset and attitude (Briscoe et al., 2006; Briscoe & Hall, 2006). A protean career mindset suggests that an individual seeks personal growth and fulfillment, while a boundaryless career mindset is characterized by significant geographical and/or emotional mobility (Briscoe et al., 2006; Briscoe & Hall, 2006).

The boundaryless career perspective encourages individuals to acquire career competencies that enhance the value of the firm, whereas the protean career perspective encourages individuals to acquire career competencies for personal career fulfilment (Briscoe et al., 2006; Briscoe & Hall, 2006).

Anakwe et al. (2000) categorized career competencies into three types: "self-knowledge skills", "interpersonal knowledge skills", and "environmental knowledge skills". Self-knowledge skills involve the capacity to gain deeper insight into oneself, encompassing strengths, weaknesses, values, and goals(Akkermans et al., 2013). This understanding allows individuals to make informed decisions about their career path, identify areas for improvement, and effectively manage their professional development. Self-knowledge skills involve activities such as self-assessment, and self-awareness exercises, attentive listening, and coping with time and stress(Akkermans et al., 2013). Interpersonal knowledge skills encompass the abilities and competencies necessary for successful interaction with others across different professional environments. These skills include assertiveness, communication, conflict resolution, and assignment, all of which entail understanding the contributions of others to one's career. Environmental knowledge skills involve thoroughly grasping one's surroundings, requiring individuals to continually monitor their environment to adapt their identity to changes effectively.

Career Self-Management Perspective (CSM)

The core concept of career self-management perspective is the belief that each person holds the main responsibility for managing their own careers (Crites, 1969, 1976; King, 2004).

According to King, (2004) the concept of CSM is based on three assumptions: firstly, Most individuals hold the belief that their career belongs to them, and by actively shaping its direction, they acquire a method to exercise control over their life's path (Tiedeman & Miller-Tiedman, 1984 as cited in King (2004); secondly, Career self-management represents a type of vocational behaviour in which individuals participate continuously throughout their professional lives, rather than solely at the beginning stages(King, 2004; Sturges et al., 2003); thirdly Exploring career self-management offers valuable insights into various career paths and progressions. Although self-managing behavior has often been illustrated in descriptions of 'conventional' careers, its relevance extends across diverse professional paths (e.g., Jennings, 1971 as cited in King, 2004).

Crites (1969, 1976)developed a career self-management framework of vocational adjustment, delineating the steps involved in making the decision to enter and pursue an occupation, effectively adapting to it, enhancing one's skills, and advancing within that chosen field.

According to CSM concept, individual's career competencies are proactive in nature(De Vos et al., 2009). In essence, it denotes the capacity and readiness of individuals to proactively take initiative and command over their career advancement. Instead of passively awaiting opportunities, those with proactive career competency actively pursue them, establish goals, and purposefully take steps to accomplish them. This proactive approach involves being proactive in identifying career interests, acquiring new skills, networking, seeking feedback, and adapting to changes in the workplace or industry. Overall, individuals with proactive career competency demonstrate a proactive mindset and behavior in managing their career trajectory and achieving their professional goals.

Proactive career behaviors are defined as deliberate actions one undertakes to attain their career objectives(De Vos et al., 2009). Furthermore,De Vos et al. (2009) identified two elements of career self-management: firstly cognitive aspect; and secondly Behavioral aspect. The cognitive aspect pertains to individuals' understanding of their own career aspirations (e.g. career insights as cited in Akkermans et al., 2013), while the behavioral aspect involves the actions they take to actively manage their career (e.g., career planning, creating opportunities as cited in Akkermans et al., 2013).

Earlier, Career Self-Management (CSM) frameworks emphasized the behavior that people undertake to progress and enhance their careers (Hall, 1990), as well as the degree to which they incorporate these behaviors into the career development process(Stumpf et al., 1983). Furthermore, CSM is considered as continuous vocational behaviour that individuals undertake throughout their professionals life (King, 2004; Sturges et al., 2002) and these behaviors serve as adaptive responses to tasks involved in career development. They are utilized to address or overcome obstacles or barriers in one's career path, ultimately resulting in vocational adjustment (King, 2004). Sturges et al. (2003)classified these behaviors into three categories: "networking behaviors", "visibility behaviors" and "mobility-oriented behaviors", while King (2004) categorized them into three classes: "positioning", "influence", and "boundary management".

Human Capital Perspective to Career Competency

This perspective shows an integrated view of career competency to human capital theory (Hooley et al., 2013; Kuijpers, 2003). From this perspective, continuous learning, training, education, and employability are regarded as investments

people make in themselves to enhance their career prospects. This concept has two important assumption: firstly, career competencies can be acquired and improved through continuous learning and employability endeavours (Kuijpers, 2003); secondly, career competencies refer to skills that are crucial for all individuals to develop in order to advance their careers, regardless of their particular job roles (Kuijpers & Scheerens, 2006).

In this perspective, career competencies are regarded as personal attributes, evaluated by individuals themselves, extending beyond specific job roles and encompassing reflective and interactive components(Kuijpers, 2003).A career competency is a functional unit of modalities (ability, behaviour and motivation) with content aspects which are relevant for career actualization. Career actualization is understood as a process of fulfilment of personal abilities and values in work, in dialogue with the environment, irrespective of career opportunities and constrains.

Human capital theory acknowledges that individuals serve as crucial resources for organizations and nations, with their varying levels of economic contribution determined by their knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes.

The theory of human capital recognizes individuals as a substantial resource for organizations, acknowledging that their contributions to economic value vary depending on their abilities, attributes, knowledge, and skills. These skills, knowledge, and abilities can be developed through continuous learning, education, experience, employability, and training. Similarly, when individuals dedicate themselves to enhancing their career competency (a combination of self-directed behaviour with content elements), they can unlock their inherent capabilities to attain their desired career advancement(Kuijpers & Scheerens, 2006).

According to(Kuijpers, 2003), four career competencies are identified:

- Self-reflection: it involves reflecting on personal abilities and motivations concerning one's career;

- Work exploration: it involves exploring the job market and particular work settings to identify suitable employment opportunities and potential for career advancement;

- Career control: it involves devising and taking action on one's own learning and work processes;

- Self-presentation: Demonstrating and engaging in discussions about one's skills and principles in the workplace, thereby expanding opportunities for career advancement.

CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH AGENDA FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Present study discusses various concepts of career competencies such as Boudaryless career perspective (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994), Intelligent career theory(Arthur et al., 1995), Protean career perspective(Hall, 1976, 1990, 1996, 2004; Hall, 1992), Career Self-Management perspective(Crites, 1969, 1976; King, 2004), and Human Capital perspective to career competencies(Hooley et al., 2013; Kuijpers, 2003). On the basis of above perspectives, we defined career competencies as a meaningful behaviour of abilities, knowledge, and skills that are acquired and developed through self-directed behavior and learning experiences, all aimed at achieving desired career advancement. The concept of career competency expanded to encompass both job-specific skills and transferable skills that enable individuals to navigate changing career landscapes.

Based on the concepts outlined above, it's evident that individuals initially assess their interest to identify potential future career paths. In other words, individuals engage in self-assessment to discern their interests and preferences, which serve as guiding principles in identifying potential career paths. This introspective phase allows individuals to align their

aspirations with their professional pursuits. Following this initial assessment, individuals embark on a proactive journey of skill acquisition and development. This involves actively seeking out opportunities to enhance their proficiency in areas relevant to their chosen career paths. By cultivating a diverse set of career-relevant skills, individuals equip themselves with the tools necessary to thrive in their chosen fields. And subsequently, they should establish connections with individuals who can assist them in achieving career success. In other words, establishing meaningful relationships with peers, mentors, and industry experts provides invaluable support and guidance in navigating the complexities of career advancement. These connections not only offer insights into industry trends and opportunities but also serve as avenues for mentorship, collaboration, and career growth.

Previous researches indicated the significant impact of career competencies on various career-related outcomes, encompassing factors such as career planning (De Vos et al., 2009); internal marketability, external marketability, and career satisfaction (Eby et al., 2003); perceived work performance (Colakoglu, 2011; Park, 2020); success in one's career (Kuijpers et al., 2006); task performance (Akkermans et al., 2013), and vocational adjustment (King, 2004). But there is a research gap is found when there is no research correlated career competencies to contextual performance, adaptive performance, and workplace deviance.

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