Career Anchors to Guide, Stabilize and Integrate Career Choices in 21st Century

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ABSTRACT:

21st Century Organizations are going through rapid transformation by many ways restructuring, downsizing, rightsizing, learning organization and so on. These changes in the world of work especially the size and degree of centralization as critical dimensions impacting on career decisions of an employee. Traditional concept of careers that almost spans for lifetime doing one type of work, in one organization does not exist in the contemporary occupational environment. Choosing a career is one of the crucial decisions an individual make in his or her life. Overall career spreads across longest and quality time span of our life cycle. If the selected career is related to individual interest and skills, needs and value career stability and success is ensured. In this article desk research is carried out to review the various secondary data sources research articles, websites, blogs to explore career anchors as useful tool to understand individual talent, needs and values. These acts as constraints to guide, stabilize, and integrate the career choices. Career anchors could be regarded as valid and reliable diagnostic tool for career choices especially at mid-career stage as employees are in better position to understand their talents, needs and values. High level of Job Satisfaction can be achieved when there is high level of correlation between career anchors and occupational type. Career anchors are difficult to predict ahead of time. Person's past work experiences, interests, aptitudes, and orientations converge into a meaningful pattern or career anchor that helps to show what is personally the most important in driving the person's career choices. To conclude each individual might have a combination of two or more career anchors, but one has to identify the most predominant one, to understand his/her career needs and aspirations to make wise career decisions in the 21st Century volatile work environment.

Keywords:

Career Anchor, Self-concept, Career Swings, Career Choice, Career Planning

INTRODUCTION

Career planning is not easy in the rapidly changing work environment. Successful career planning requires setting realistic career goals, determine the strengths and weaknesses in job performance and develop marketable skills. The process of career planning requires to answer three questions 1) Who am I? 2) Where Do I want to go 3) How Can I get there. To answer these questions one need to introspect and have an assessment of needs, interest values and abilities. Career anchors are used as a method of self assessment and they are a combination of motivating factors, ideas, interest and constraints that guide, stabilize and integrate career choice. The identification of career anchors can be useful in two ways. Firstly, it helps to introspect and secondly it helps individuals to make better future decisions. For example, some of us are achievement oriented, while others are value oriented. Individuals, who are achievement oriented, prioritize their goals ahead of their values and will pursue those goals as their top priority. Individuals who are value oriented will carefully consider their priorities and

values, considering only career goals that are consistence with their priorities even though it is less interesting and less fulfilling career. Some generalizations have been studied (Gilmer, 1966) which was found useful in preparing for career planning like: People differ in their abilities, interests, personalities, and desires; Organizations differ in the opportunities they can provide for taking care of individual differences. The most effective personal adjustment comes where the nature of the work itself and the way of life that goes with it. Community, home, leisure-time activities, and friends-are congenial to the aptitudes, interests, and values of the person. No job provides complete satisfaction. No person completely fits the job. The interaction between the individual and his/her environment determines career patterns and career changes.

Statement of Problem: In twenty first century organizations are going through rapid transformation by many ways restructuring, downsizing, rightsizing, learning organization and so on. The concept of career anchor becomes especially applicable as more and more

people laid off in downsizing. To choose career wisely, one should have the knowledge and judgment of self as well as world of work. They need to figure out what to do next in their lives? Do understanding career anchors help an individual to redefine their career?

Objectives of Study:
1. To study career anchors, in the context of career decisions in 21st century volatile work environment.
2. To study the broader classification and related features of respective anchors.

Scope: The functional scope is limited to in-depth study of career anchors identified by Edgar Schein, a professor at MIT, who developed the idea of career anchor and came up with eight career anchors as: 1) Autonomy/Independence 2) Security/Stability, 3) Technical/Functional Competence 4) General Management 5) Entrepreneurial Creativity 6) Service 7) Pure Challenge 8) Life Style. In this article concept of unplanned or accidental careers were not considered. The focus is on Planned Career Development. The was carried out in Indian context.

Methodology: Desk Research is carried out by using various online data sources like: review of related research articles, books and websites. Efforts were made to answer the research problem by defining research objectives. All the findings and discussions narrated logically and concluded the topic. Scope for further research was stated along with the limitations of study.

Literature Review: The career is a profession, occupation or employment with opportunities for progress and advancement. There are lot of discussion about employment and employability. Hence we can say that mere degree does not ensure employability. Professionals in school counseling centers or career guidance centers spend a good part of their time assisting people with their career planning. Fortunately, they have access to a variety of tests and inventories that help individuals match themselves with a compatible career. Although such inventories do not provide some magical right choice, they usually furnish valuable leads, especially when the results are shared with a counselor. Some of the more well-known inventories are described below: John Holland's Self-Directed Search (SDS), Harrington-O'Shea's Career Decision-Making System (CDM), System of Interactive Guidance and Information (SIGI), Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory (Sell). The result of above said inventories have proved helpful in predicting which individuals will remain in a given field. However, these inventories cannot predict their actual success in a given field, as there are many subjective factors involved especially personal motivation. While selecting a compatible career, it is advised that individuals career plans to be discussed with someone like a teacher or a

school counselor who is interested in guiding and counseling. After ending up with a choice among, several compatible careers, one has to make decision. One of the helpful strategies in making, such an important decision is understand your career anchor. Through the interaction between an individual and work environment one can identify growing area of stability within himself, a clearer occupational self –concept. Schein (1978) terms this occupational self-concept a career anchor. The career anchors consist: 1) Talents 2) Needs 3) values and are designed to highlight the gradual integration of these components in the person's total self-concept. Career anchors are therefore 'inside' the person and influence career choices and decision. If an individual moves into a situation that does not meet his need, compromise his/her values and does not utilize abilities, he/she is likely to feel 'Pulled Back' into a more congruent environment hence the metaphor of anchors (Schein1978). The career anchors can be therefore be defined as those aspects of the individual's occupational self-concept that he would not give up if forced to make a choice (Schein 1990). organizations need to pay great attention on work values of individuals, provide a working culture that provides challenges with many learning opportunities, and paying attention to one's culture and personnel interests to further boost employability orientation (Jeffrey Lawrence D'Silva & Jamaliah Abdul Hamid (2014) .

A person's career anchor is his or her self-concept and only evolve as one can gain occupational and life experience. Schein's original research in the mid-1970 showed that most people's self-concepts revolved around five categories reflecting basic values, motives and needs: 1. Autonomy/independence 2. Security/Stability 3.Technical-Functional competence 4. General Managerial Competence 5. Entrepreneurial Creativity. Follow-up studies with a wider range of occupations in the 1980's revealed three additional anchor categories: 6. Service or Dedication to a Cause 7. Pure challenge 8. Life Style. (Edgar H. Schein 1996). The author has focused on the various type career anchors and its implications on career development. In addition to the knowledge of career stages, another concept that can help people to understand their jobs is that of career anchors (Schein, 1975).

Schein (1978) states that the problem for society and organizations is to match individual needs with those of the organizations throughout their entire career. Coetzee and Schreuder (2009) argue that different types of careers offer different types of rewards and opportunities to satisfy work and career needs (Schreuder A.M.G. & Coetzee, M. 2006). To compete in today's rapidly changing work environment people need to find out what their career anchors are? In order

to make smart future plans (Schein, 2006). The main requirement for organizations is to remain competitive, which necessitates effective communication of expectations between employees and employers in terms of discussions about needs, values and career orientations. Career paths can be structured and mapped using Schein's career anchors in a constructive succession plan at the highest levels of the organization. Organizations have to help employees to plan their career and manage them. The employee has to be given a chance to identify their competencies, aptitudes and then provide the right opportunities. Organizations which help their employees plan their career; enjoy the benefits of a motivated and loyal workforce.

At the end of 20th century especially during the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s, Schein's work introduced the operationalization of the multi-dimensional use of career anchors and their relationship to career success (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2009; Singh, Bhattacharjee & Kodwani, 2009). Organizations are dependent on the performance of their employees, and employees are dependent on organizations to provide jobs and career opportunities (Schein, 1978).

In an increasingly complex and global world individuals have to become more self reliant. But you can't be more self reliant if you don't have a concept of what you are good at? What you value? What motivates you? This self image of competence, motives and values is your career anchor.Schein maintains that the further into a career a person progresses, the greater the likelihood of there being only one anchor. However, Weber and Ladkin (2009) found that a multitude of career anchors guide industry professionals' careers, regardless of whether there is a single dominant or a multiplicity of anchors is a person's self-image, indicating what they excel in and their wants and values (Bezuidenhout, M., Grobler, A., & Rudolph, E.C. 2013).

Gubler, Biemann, Tschopp and Grote (2015) on the complex relationship between career anchors and the socio demographic variables gender, ethnicity, and social class. In their studies, Gobillon, Meurs and Roux (2015) concluded that women have significantly lower access to the highest-paying jobs and that highly qualified men are more often hired than women who are highly qualified for high-paying positions. Psychological career resources are necessarily exhibited in a wide range of career preferences, career values, career-related skills and attitudes that form a person's career consciousness (Coetzee, 2007).

After 1978, Edgar Schein's work led to the development of the following eight career anchors that guide the

career decisions of employees (Schein, 1990:4–11). For Schein (1990), these findings refer to the following question: should organizations invest in career management systems that build a stable environment for the employee or should they look for a new set of concepts for the hiring system that facilitates the entry and exit of employees? In response, the author proposes to investigate further not only the changing nature of work but also the self-image that employees construct from their own socio-professional lives, through what he called COI, whose typology is intended to help people decipher their priorities and negotiate career management with organizations. The first five anchors were identified by Schein (1974, 1978) in studies conducted in 1970s, and the last three were added from studies conducted in the late 1980s (Schein 1990, 1992). Feldman and Bolino (1996) reconceptualised Schein's eight career anchors into three distinct groupings along with the inherent motivations underlying the various career anchors. These motivations are described as being talent-based, needs-based and value-based anchors.

I) Talent Based Anchors: They act as career enablers. Details are as follows:

1. *Technical/Functional Competence:* Those with a technical/functional competence anchor exhibit strong inclination to develop something which they can call their own. Engineers, Scientist, technologists, entrepreneurs etc, come under this category. The self-perception of people with this anchor is built around specific talents and abilities. They prefer certain areas of expertise, occupying technical, consulting or specialized advice positions. (Adriane Vieira ,Plínio Rafael Reis Monteiro , Alexandre de Pádua Carrieri , Vanessa de Almeida Guerra Luiz Carlos Brant 2019) .

2. *General Management:* These individuals choose to influence, guide and develop others. They enjoy shouldering high level of responsibility, challenging varied and integrative work. They hunt for leadership opportunities to contribute organization significantly. They desire for high pay levels. These people seek situations where they can be analytical, and can utilize their interpersonal skills, and exercise power. Those with management as a career anchor have good planning, organizing, managing and controlling skills. They have a broader view of things and play a facilitating role. They enjoy responsibility and revel in uncertainty. People with this anchor need to have the ability to lead in order to achieve organizational goals effectively (Adriane Vieira ,Plínio Rafael Reis Monteiro , Alexandre de Pádua Carrieri , Vanessa de Almeida Guerra Luiz Carlos Brant 2019) .

3. *Entrepreneur/Creative:* Those with creativity as an anchor are more often successful as artists,

entrepreneurs and innovators. They enjoy jobs where they are given enough freedom to 'Create' and are bound by organizational framework. Starting a new business, working in a research laboratory, being a major player on a new project's team, and indulging in similar activities are important to their self-worth. They are obsessed with the need to create requiring new challenge rewards, building new organizations, reshaping existing businesses, putting efforts for creating wealth, ownership freedom and power. The central need of people with this anchor is to produce something of their own and to express themselves through the results of their work and the use of their creativity.
(Adriane Vieira ,Plínio Rafael Reis Monteiro , Alexandre de Pádua Carrieri , Vanessa de Almeida Guerra Luiz Carlos Brant 2019) .

II) Need Based Anchors: They act as career enablers, details are as follows:
4. *Autonomy/Independence:* The individuals having this anchor prefer remaining free from corporate constraints, and also flexible and autonomous. The overriding factor for some people in career decisions is to maintain their liberty. They seek to minimize organizational constraints. These people, not surprisingly, prefer small, organic types of organizations to work. Those individuals desire to have freedom to operate and autonomy to take their own decisions. They want to be self reliant and do not like to be bossed over. They excel as entrepreneurs, professors, consultants, professionals and free-lancers. The people identified with this anchor wish, above all, to be in control of their professional lives. Therefore, they do not feel comfortable with routines, rules, uniforms, work schedules, as well as all other forms of organizational control (Adriane Vieira ,Plínio Rafael Reis Monteiro , Alexandre de Pádua Carrieri , Vanessa de Almeida Guerra Luiz Carlos Brant 2019) .
5. *Security:* These individuals prefer to be in stable and predictable work, who, is concerned about the future and wants to create a lifestyle or a set of circumstances to assure his/her finance or geographic concerns. For some people, a key factor in career decision-making is work stability. A new position with great opportunities and challenges but little job security would be incongruent with these people's needs. They prefer job and organizational stability, employment contracts, additional employment benefits, attractive pension plans. They wish to be free from any anxiety of uncertainty or insecurity. Therefore, they prefer to remain in the same kind of job and with the same employer, for life. Prefer recognition for loyalty and steady performance with the assurance of stability and steady employment. This type of individuals might face a problem in a dynamic and fast-paced

organization/occupation. People with this type of anchor are worried about finding a job or occupation that makes them economically secure and stable. (Adriane Vieira ,Plínio Rafael Reis Monteiro , Alexandre de Pádua Carrieri , Vanessa de Almeida Guerra Luiz Carlos Brant 2019) .

6. *Life Style :*For some people, nothing in life is more important than just enjoying life. They have a disinclination to sacrifice life style solely for career advancement. People with this anchor want flexibility in employment and integration between their individual needs, their family and their occupation, even if they sacrifice their career somewhat. Organizational attitude that respect personal and family concern and that makes renegotiation of the psychological contract possible (Adriane Vieira ,Plínio Rafael Reis Monteiro , Alexandre de Pádua Carrieri , Vanessa de Almeida Guerra Luiz Carlos Brant 2019) .
III) Value Based Anchors: They act as career enablers, details are as follows:
7. *Service:* Service as a career anchor drives individuals to take up jobs in not-for-profit service organizations, NGO's special schools for the disabled and hospitals for the underprivileged. The worthwhile causes they pursue can range from environmental protection to poverty alleviation. People with this anchor are practically the extreme opposite of the previous ones since their concern revolves around other people, of a cause, ideal, or value. (Adriane Vieira ,Plínio Rafael Reis Monteiro , Alexandre de Pádua Carrieri , Vanessa de Almeida Guerra Luiz Carlos Brant 2019) . They work together some important values for improving the world in some manner. They prefer to be in helping profession like nursing, teaching etc expects fair pay.
8. *Pure Challenge:* People with this career anchor just love solving difficult problems. They are attracted towards challenges that do not follow any pattern or style. They are also called as warrior/adventurer. Hence this an integrating set of forces that describe an individual, who craves for variety in tasks and activities, prefers adventure, and enjoys serving as a corporate "troubleshooter". They pursue challenges for themselves. (Adriane Vieira ,Plínio Rafael Reis Monteiro , Alexandre de Pádua Carrieri , Vanessa de Almeida Guerra Luiz Carlos Brant 2019) .

Findings and Discussions:
1. Organizational size and degree of centralization emerged as two critical dimensions impacting on career decisions of individuals in 21st century.
2. People make their career decisions based on their career anchors even in 21st century. Career anchors are broadly classified on the basis of Talent, Need and Value of Persons.
3. Career anchors could be regarded as valid and reliable diagnostic tool for career choices especially at

mid-career stage as employees are in better position to understand them.

4. Each individual might have a combination of two or more career anchors, but one has to identify the most predominant one, to understand his/her career needs and aspirations.

5. High level of Job Satisfaction can be achieved when there is match between career anchors and occupational type.

6. Schein believes that career anchors are difficult to predict ahead of time because they are evolutionary and a product of a process of discovery. Some people may never find out what their career anchors are until they have to make major choices like leaving a good job and starting a business of their choice.

7. Schein's inventory has received much criticism, especially regarding the stability of the career anchors over time, in a social context of high volatility and mobility in labor markets but still valid and useful tool to make right career decisions.

Limitations: The functional scope is limited to in-depth study of career anchors identified by Edgar Schein, a professor at MIT. The study doesn't cover concept of unplanned or accidental careers. The focus is on Planned Career Development. A study conducted is pure desk research and qualitative in nature.

Scope for further Research: An empirical Study can be conducted during or post covid-19 pandemic to understand the changes occurred in the people's career in terms of complete change, partial change or no change. Also one can study perception and expectation of working population towards internationalization of career.

Conclusion: Career Anchor Play significant role in career decision and in turn helps to achieve career success or sometimes to redefine career decisions in the volatile dynamic environment of 21st century.

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