RESEARCH ARTICLE

Career Anchors Assessment: A Survey of Personnel of Vice-chancellor Offices in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: A career anchors consists of jobs that a person holds in order to achieve a professional goal. Career anchors development management results in job satisfaction, professional commitment, and higher effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to determine different dimensions of career anchors among in the personnel of vice-chancellor offices of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences.

Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted in 2012. The study sample was 236 personnel of the Vice-chancellor offices of Shiraz university of Medical Sciences, selected using ratio estimation method. The 43-item Schein's career anchors orientation inventory was used as the study instrument. T-test, ANOVA and Spearman coefficient were used for data analysis.

Findings: The highest mean score of career anchors was observed in service port (3.28 ± 0.43) and the lowest mean was observed in identity port (2.47 ± 0.5). Significant inverse relationships were found between age and work experience in the innovation port. There was also significant difference between genders in service and security ports.

Conclusions: The main career anchor was related to services port, which highlights the importance providing quality health care services to the patients. In order to improve work situation it is recommended to hire well-educated managers for job development and provide educational courses for managers and personnel.

Keywords: Career anchors, Motivation, Job satisfaction

Background and Objectives

Human recourses play a decisive role in the achievement of objectives and requirements of the healthcare systems as well as their effectiveness and efficiency. Human recourses are considered as the most important assets to any organizations, and if they are omitted, then what remain!? only factors and facilities of the organization, which are not useable per se [1, 2]. One of the fundamental roles of human resource management is to manage human resources successfully in order to improve personnel motivation and satisfaction, and consequently, enhancing the qualified services to the customers. In other words, on

the one hand, the primary career goal is to enhance individuals' profession to the top of the ladder, and, promoting organizations' benefits is considered as a priority in organizations, on the other. Therefore, human resource managers have an important role in order to match individuals' needs with those of the organizations throughout their entire career. For this reason, career anchors development management could be useful in order to progress personnel during their career toward the desired excellence [3]. This can be very substantial in healthcare systems as the higher satisfaction of personnel influences the healthcare services and patients' satisfaction [4, 5].

Career design and analysis is considered as a procedure of career development resulting in a greater understanding of employees' specific expectations, and paves the way for the promotion and entering to a higher and more desirable level [3]. In other words, career development includes the sequence of jobs

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that a person passes to achieve a job objective and to make it to the top of the ladder in his/her chosen profession [6]. It represents individual's unique combination of perceived career competence, values and motives, which guide and fix individuals' path to progress after several years of experience and feedback from the real world [7]. Therefore, human recourses have the expectation of keeping a richer job in which they have more progress toward promotion and acquiring new skills. Towards that end, career anchors development design is useful in improving the identity and dignity of personnel in the workplace, and provides opportunities for more progress [3]. In healthcare systems also the main purpose of human recourses managers is to enhance the employee effectiveness and efficiency in order to improve the quality of healthcare services and patient satisfaction [1, 8]. Therefore, career anchors development is based on the assumption that the most successful people in an organization are guided to a career that is associated with the maximum benefits and position and enhance their work self-confidence. So identifying the core career anchors is very essential as it shows the individuals' interests, abilities and values [3]. For this purpose, eight career anchors have been identified by the literature including technical/functional competence (TF), general managerial competence (GM), security/stability (SE), entrepreneurial creativity (EC), autonomy/independence (AU), service/dedication to cause (SV), pure challenge (CH), and identification/life style (LS) [9, 10].

Considering the importance of identifying and improving career anchors in healthcare systems in order to enhance the motivation and satisfaction of personnel, the main aim of the present study was to determine the distribution of the eight career anchors in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences based on Schein's career anchor model, and identify differences across the demographic variables.

Method

Study design and sampling

This cross-sectional study was conducted in 2009 in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. The research population consisted of the personnel of six vice-chancellor departments including Development & Resource Management Affairs, Clinical Affairs, Education, Healthcare, Research, and Student Affairs. Using power SSC software, the mean estimation formula, and the previous studies, a sample size of 236 participants was estimated. Simple random sampling was conducted among the vice- chan-

cellor offices of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences.

Measurement Instrument

The T.J. Delong questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire consists of 43 close-ended questions comprising two sections; the first section was designed for socio-demographic characteristics, and the second section was devoted to items concerning identification of eight career anchors including technical aptitude (6 items), service (6 items), work independence (5 items), identification (5 items), variety (6 items), managerial aptitude (6 items), security (5 items) and creativity (4 items). The items were designed based on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (absolutely disagree) to 4 (absolutely agree) [11].

The validity of questionnaire was approved by the authorities and specialists in healthcare management professions from Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, while its reliability was assessed by the author. An internal consistency of 80% was found for the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha coefficient in an introductory study.

Statistical analysis

Data were analyzed by SPSS 11.5. Pearson's correlation test, ANOVA, and t-test at a significance level of = 5% were used for examining the relationships between the anchors and the socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, education level, work experience, type of employment, and type of vice-chancellor.

Results

According to the findings, the mean age of participants was 33.98.11 years (age range: 21-62 years), of which 49.6% were males and the rest were females. 52% of the participants had bachelor degree, and 8% had associate degree. The majority of the participants (32.2%) were under long-term contract, while 5.5% of them were under short-term contract. The average work experience of the participants was 9.17.5 years. The highest percentage of the participants worked in Development & Resource Management Affairs vice-chancellor (49.6%), while the lowest percentage of them worked in Student Affairs vice-chancellor (4.2%).

Regarding the careers anchors analysis, the personnel of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences vice chancellors gained the highest score in the service anchors with a mean score of 3.28 0.43 (score range: 1-4), while the lowest mean score belonged to the identification platform with a score of 2.470.5 (score

Table 1   Mean and Standard Deviations of career anchors of the study sample

Vice-chancellor departments	Technical/ Functional Competence		Service/ Dedication to a cause		Autonomy/ Independence		Identification/ Life Style		Pure Challenge		General Managerial Competence		Security/ Stability		Entrepreneur / Creativity	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Development & Resource Management Affairs	2.97	1.03	3.33	0.39	3.11	0.51	2.43	0.50	3.05	0.62	2.87	0.82	2.64	0.40	2.89	0.45
Clinical Affairs	2.89	0.38	3.29	0.41	3.19	0.40	2.43	0.53	2.92	0.47	2.79	0.45	2.61	0.32	2.75	0.46
Education	2.95	0.34	3.20	0.32	3.15	0.42	2.60	0.47	3.2	0.50	2.78	0.52	2.73	0.44	2.83	0.43
Healthcare	2.86	0.34	3.20	0.45	3.16	0.32	2.35	0.32	2.94	0.38	2.67	0.54	2.57	0.29	2.72	0.43
Research	2.84	0.38	3.44	0.45	3.11	0.50	2.62	0.59	3.09	0.30	2.92	0.39	2.67	0.34	2.88	0.43
Student Affairs	2.94	0.36	3	0.47	3.80	0.55	2.58	0.23	2.75	0.39	2.65	0.42	2.65	0.28	3.05	0.43

range: 1-4). The maximum career mean score was obtained by the employees of Research vice-chancellor (2.950.27) while the lowest mean score was obtained by the employees of Student Affairs vice-chancellor (2.780.21). Comparison of different career anchors showed that the highest mean score belonged to the employees of Research Department vice-chancellor (2.95(0.27) and in the service anchors (3.440.45) while the lowest mean score related to the employees of Healthcare vice-chancellor in the identification anchors (2.350.32).

According to the findings, there was a negative significant relationship between the age of participants and the creativity anchors (p = 0.03), as well as work experience and the creativity anchors (p = 0.006). In addition, there was a significant difference between service (p = 0.04) security (p = 0.001) anchors and gender, showing a higher mean scores for males. No significant relationships/differences were found between the career anchors and other demographic variables such as educational level, type of employment, and workplace departments.

Discussion

Career anchors system is a broad, organized and programmed effort for balancing the professional needs of individuals and the organizations' needs to human recourses. It consists of talents, motivations, values and attitudes which improve stability and work orientation to employees. The recognition of these anchors empowers personnel to identify priorities for special fields in their jobs. Identification of these priorities assists employees to plan their careers in order to obtain the maximum satisfaction [12]. Therefore, fitting the individuals' professions to their career anchors results in a better performance, prevents premature exit from the profession, and also decreases workplace stressors [13]. Many studies have been conducted in terms of assessing career anchors, and in all of them, one or more anchors were identified as the main factors influencing the individuals' career [7, 9, 14]. As the findings of the present study indicate, the highest mean score of career anchors among the employees of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences was related to service anchors. This shows that the first priority of the personnel of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences is providing services to the patients and/or customers, and being helpful to their community, which is related to the main values and norms of their society. The findings of some other studies were also in agreement with the findings of the current study, indicating that in such situations, the employees with core values find motivation from the work itself, and have a high tendency to make the world better [13, 15]. These kinds of employees with high core values desire to try more to know how they can help and provide services to the others members of their society, and this is more important for them than utilizing their talents [13].

According to the findings of the present study, the

highest score after service anchor was related to work independence. This shows that the employees tend to retain their independence and freedom in their work, and minimize the organizational limitations. In addition, they even prefer this principle over promotion and hunting the opportunities. However, the participants had a lower mean score in the identification anchor in comparison to the other career anchors, indicating that it is not important for the employees of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences to be identified with their organization. This shows that the main priority of the personnel of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences is to be flexible and independent in providing healthcare services to the patients and/or customers.

Many of the researchers such as Danziger and Valency (2008), [9], Ramakrishna and Potosky (2003) [13], and Klapwijk and Rommes (2009) [7] have put a strong emphasize on the technical anchor in comparison to other anchors. In these studies, the technical anchor was at a higher level, indicating that specified skill and fluency in a special function has priority over other anchors. In addition, the employees did not give any priority to the work independence and creativity anchors for their career. It seems that the employees believe that technical specialized skill is necessary for career development. However, in the present study, the technical anchor was placed fourth in the view of employees. It is likely that the employees of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences do not consider aptitude and technical specifically for promotion in their organization. This may be due to different organizational conditions in different countries, as well as the cultural norms of different societies, which lead to differing characteristics in their career progress direction.

The findings of the present study showed that with increase in the employees' age and work experience, the mean score of the creativity anchor is reduced. With increasing the age and entering the final stage of the career, it is likely that the employees consider preparation for retirement, coping with the consequences of the oldness, the boring state remaining from the intermediate period, and the negative aspects of advanced age and its effects on their jobs. In addition, lack of encouragement for creative activities, job becoming a boring daily task, resistance of officials to change, and lack of motivation among the personnel during the years of work also lead to lethargy, stagnation, and lack of a tendency to innovate. However, studies conducted by Madjar and colleagues (2002), and Amabile and colleagues (2005) revealed no relationship between age and creativity [16, 17].

In addition, our findings showed a relationship between the service anchor and gender, indicating the fact that the male employees of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences consider providing of healthcare services to their community as their first priority. A study conducted by Danziger, et al. (2006) also demonstrated gender differences in all career anchors except security and technical attitude [9]. In the present study, men had a higher mean score in the security anchor, which is consistent with Tladinyane's study (2007) [18]. Having higher mean score in the security anchor for males indicate that organizational and job stability, good employment privileges, and attractive retirement benefits could be more important for them. This could be realistic considering the men's commitment as financial in charge of the family, undesired economic conditions of the society, and difficulty in finding a job. Moreover, it could be also justified based on the Maslo's needs hierarchy. According to this model, after meeting the physiological needs that are a factor for protection of human life, the needs to security and safety are the most imminent ones. These needs, which consist of physical security and not being deprived of basic needs, are placed at the second level of the hierarchy of needs. If the needs at this level are not satisfied, no motivation would exist in order to move into the next level; this is in contrast with the findings of the current study [19].

Conclusions

Career anchors are an informed effort on the part of the individuals for gaining information on skills, attitudes, values, opportunities, limitations, choices and achievements, as well as recognition of job related objectives and setting up a plan for achieving these objectives. They include development, implementation and guidance of career designs that any individual considers in order to improve this/her career [3]. The findings of the current study highlighted that the first priority of the personnel of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences vice chancellors is related to the service anchor in comparison to other anchors. This indicates that providing high quality healthcare services to the patients and/or customers is very valuable for the personnel of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences; this in turn could result in more satisfied patients, as well as improving the societal health and wellbeing.

One of the main concerns of healthcare systems is providing the high-quality services at the lowest possible cost [20, 21]. To achieve this goal, managers and policy-makers should be aware of the vital role of human resources as the key factor of success in the

healthcare systems, influencing the efficiency of services. The key recommendation of the current study is to focus on the broad educations both in medical universities and healthcare workplaces [22] on the importance of human resources and factors influencing their motivations. This subsequently could result in improving human resources, and thus enhancing the benefits of healthcare systems. In addition assignment of expert managers, who are educated in career management, could be of value for this purpose. Furthermore, building an organizational culture in which human resources and career management are potentially appreciated, and providing an environment in which both the employees and managers know their places in the career system, seem essential. It is also suggested to conduct similar studies in future, and the findings be compared in terms of any changes in the dimensions of career development. Although this study was conducted in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences vice-chancellors, which provide supportive systems for healthcare services, further studies need to be conducted among the personnel of teaching and non-teaching hospitals affiliated with Shiraz University of Medical Sciences.

Competing Interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions

PH and MM contributed in the study design, data collection and analysis. AS involved in the design, editing and the structure of study. NH and VK contributed to the preparation and the revision of manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of manuscript.

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