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Relationships between career motivation, affective commitment and job satisfaction

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Abstract

Career motivation theory (London, 1983), applies motivation theory to understanding career plans, behaviors and decisions of employees, such as searching for and accepting a job, deciding to stay with an organization, revising career plans, seeking new job experiences, and setting and trying to accomplish career goals. Career motivation is defined in terms of tree major components: career resilience, career insight and career identity. Each component has multiple elements. Understanding how each element is related to employees' affective commitment to the organization and their job satisfaction may help fostering employee motivation and improve the effectiveness of human resources. To date, there have been several conceptual studies theorizing the content and construct of career motivation. However, there has been limited empirical work to examine the relationship between the elements of career motivation and key employee behavior such as employment and turnover intentions, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and work performance. Accordingly, this study examines the relationships between the components of career motivation, employees' affective commitment and their job satisfaction, while controlling their demographic characteristics such as age, gender, income and organizational tenure. For this aim, we conducted a field research on 250 employees working in various industries. Research results showed that career motivation has a positive correlation with organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Individual characteristics except respondents' gender did not exert any significant association with career motivation. Theoretical and managerial implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: Career Motivation; Organizational Commitment; Job Satisfaction; Human Resources Management, Employee Commitment

1. Introduction

Attracting and retaining talented employees is vital to corporate success in today's competitive business world. In order to link the human resource policies and practices with the strategic objectives of the organization, human resources managers must set actions and decisions that determine the long-run performance of the company. Increasing competition forces companies to have highly skilled, motivated loyal employees, who are committed to the success of the organization while planning a long-run career within the organization. There is considerable expense for replacing employees since they represent a significant investment in terms of locating, recruiting, and training. Yet,

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committed and loyal employees are expected to act in the best interest of the organization. Thus, understanding how employees shape and develop their career plans and which factors influence their motivation to further their career within the organization are important questions for human resources professionals. The career motivation theory is used to understand career related attitudes and behavior of employees. The theory attempts to explain various career and work related behaviors such as 'searching for and accepting a job, deciding to stay with an organization, revising career plans, seeking training and new job experiences, and setting and trying to accomplish career goals (London, 1983: 620). Career motivation construct has three dimensions; (a) career resilience-the ability to overcome career setbacks; (b) career insight-the extent to which the individual has realistic career perceptions: (c) career identity-factors affecting career decisions and behaviors (London. 1983). Understanding how each element is related to employees' affective commitment to the organization and their job satisfaction may help fostering employee motivation and improve the effectiveness of human resources management practices. Since mid 1980's, numerous studies have addressed career motivation theory, its measurement, association with individual characteristics and firm level variables (London, 1983; 1985; 1988; 1991; 1993; London & Mone, 1987; Noe et al., 1990; Grzeda & Prince 1997; Fox, 1997; London & Noe, 1997). Nonetheless, research on the relationship between career motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and employment & turnover intentions is scarce. For the very reason, this study attempts to examine the association between career motivation components and job satisfaction, affective commitment and demographic characteristics of employees. For this aim, we conducted a field research by using the survey methodology on a sample of employees working in different industries. This study aims to add the current HRM literature by investigating the career motivation construct and its association with employee behavior. In the next section we provide a literature review on career motivation and key employee behavior such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Following the literature review, research methodology and data analysis are presented. The paper is finished by concluding remarks and research implications.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Career Motivation

London (1983) defined career motivation as a multidimensional construct consisting of three major elements: career resilience, career insight and career identity. Career identity is the direction of motivation; insight is the energizing or arousal component of motivation that encourages involvement in career planning and career decisions; and career resilience is the maintenance or persistence component (Noe, Noe & Bachhuber, 1990).

Career resilience is represents the ability to adapt to changing circumstances even when circumstances are discouraging or disruptive. It encompasses welcoming job and organizational changes, looking forward to working with new and different people, having self-confidence and being willing to take risks. Employees with a high career resilience score would be expected to engage in autonomous work, would react positively to organizational changes, demonstrate initiative, and proactively strive to further work-related skills and knowledge. Career insight is the ability to be realistic about one's career and clarity of the individual's career goals. It consists of establishing clear, feasible career goals and having self-knowledge, specifically, knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses. Employees with high scores on career insight would be likely to engage in activities such as investigating potential career changes gathering information about career opportunities and identifying realistic goals and action plans, leading to more understanding of personal strengths, weakness, interests and level of career satisfaction (London and Bassman, 1989). Career identity is the extent that people define themselves by their work and the organization they work for. It is associated with job, organizational, and professional involvement. It also involves the degree to which employees immerse themselves in activities related to their job and the organization, work hard, and express pride in their employer. High scorers on career identity tend to be highly involved in the job & organization and they demonstrate a high need for advancement and promotion.

Extant literature shows that individuals were more likely to have high levels of career motivation when their manager was supportive, provided clear performance feedback, encouraged subordinates to set career goals, initiated discussions related to development and career-related issues and made the job challenging (Noe, Noe, and Bachhuber, 1990). In order to promote career motivation, employees should be provided with positive reinforcement for good performance, given opportunities for achievement and input, and receive support for skill development (London & Bray, 1984). Reduced career motivation would decrease the instrumental value of maintaining social relationships that would benefit ones career (Carstensten, 1998; Kanfer and Ackerman, 2004).

In order to measure the career motivation construct, existing research trends rely on extracting factors that correspond to the three elements (e.g., London, 1993; Noe et al., 1990). Sub-domains are usually not explored or discussed. Currently there exist two similar measures of career motivation. These measures slightly differ in their focus: whereas London (1991) items are more concerned with feelings and attitudes related to work and career, Noe et al. (1990) items essentially focus on actual behaviors. Grzeda and Prince (1997) proposed a revised career motivation scale combining items from the two existing measures and provided empirical evidence on construct validity. Thus, in this study we used the combined scale in order to examine the relationships between the components of career motivation and key employee behavior.

2.2. Organizational Commitment

The concept of organizational commitment is central to organizational behavior research. Organizational commitment is defined as an individual's attitude towards an organization that consists of (a) a strong belief in, and acceptance of, the organization's goals and values; (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (c) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Mowday et al., 1982). Organizational commitment has three primary components: (1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (3) a strong desire to remain with the organization (Porter et al., 1974). Highly committed employees intend to stay within the organization and to work hard toward its goals (Luthans, McCaul, Dodd, 1985). Meyer & Allen (1991) argued that there were three types of organizational commitment: (1) Affective Commitment: refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement with the organization. Employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization because they want to do so. (2) Continuance Commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Employees whose primary link to the organization is based on continuance commitment remain because they need to do so. (3) Normative Commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment. Employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the organization. Career identity can be conceptually tied to work commitment (e.g. Dubin & Champoux, 1975), organizational commitment (Salancik, 1977) and organizational citizenship (Organ, 1988). Thus, career motivation may positively correlate with organizational commitment.

Although affective, continuance, and normative commitment are used to capture the multidimensional nature of organizational commitment, affective commitment is considered a more effective measurement of organizational commitment. Employees with strong affective commitment would be motivated to higher levels of performance and make more meaningful contributions than employees who expressed continuance or normative commitment (Brown, 2003:31). Thus, affective commitment alone is one of the key concepts of employee behavior. In this study we examined the association between career motivation and affective organizational commitment.

2.3. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a result of employee's perception of how well his job provides those things that are viewed as important. It is commonly defined as the pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience (Locke, 1976). Job satisfaction is often determined by how well the outcome meet or exceed expectations and it represents several related attitudes such as work itself, pay, promotion opportunities, supervision and coworkers which are most important characteristics of a job about which people have effective response (Luthans, 1998). Job satisfaction is so important that its absence often leads to lethargy and reduced organizational commitment (Moser, 1997). Dissatisfied employees are more likely to quit their jobs or be absent than satisfied employees (Rusbult et al, 1988).

Career motivation can also be associated with job satisfaction. People who enjoy their job are apt to spend time learning more about it and associating with people who are also involved. Job satisfaction can be positively related to one's choice to adapt to changing circumstances even when circumstances are discouraging or disruptive. It encompasses welcoming job and organizational changes, continue working rather than quitting. Consequently, those who report enjoying their jobs are expected to have strong career motivation or vice versa.

Under the light of previous research on career motivation, we propose positive relationships between the components of career motivation, affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Further, we propose that respondents' age, gender, organizational and job tenure may be associated with career motivation. Accordingly, we developed the following hypotheses:

H1: Career motivation is positively related to organizational commitment.
H2: Career motivation is positively related to job satisfaction.
H3: Individual characteristics affect the career motivation
       H3a: Career motivation scores vary according to respondents' gender
       H3b: Career motivation scores correlate with respondents' age
       H3c: Career motivation scores correlate with respondents' income level
       H3d: Career motivation scores correlate with respondents' organizational tenure
       H3e: Career motivation scores correlate with respondents' job tenure

In order to test these hypotheses, we conducted a field research. In the following section research methodology and data analyses are presented.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Goal

This study aims to identify the relationships between the elements of career motivation, affective commitment and job satisfaction. In addition, the study aims to examine the associations between career motivation and employee characteristics such as age, gender, income and tenure. In order to test the hypotheses, a field research was conducted by using the survey methodology.

3.2. Sample and Data Collection

The survey instrument was a questionnaire including some demographic questions and the "integrated career motivation scale" developed by Grzeda and Prince (1997). A convenience sample of 250 employees participated in this study. The respondents were working in a variety of industries including education, higher education, services, banking, finance, automotive and construction. The research questionnaire was sent to their e-mail addresses. Filled questionnaires were returned to the researchers as e-mail attachment as well.

3.3. Measures

Career Motivation was measured using 18 items taken from the integrated career motivation scale developed and validated by of Grzeda and Prince (1997). Participants were requested to indicate to what extent they attained the listed items at their workplace, on a 5-point response scale ranging from "5=To a great extent" to "1= Not at all". All of the scale items can be seen on Table 1.
Affective commitment was measured using 8 items from Allen and Meyer's (1990) "Organizational Commitment Questionnaire". Participants were requested to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements using five-point Likert type scales (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree). Examples of items include "I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization"; "I feel emotionally attached to this company" and "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization".
Job satisfaction was measured with a 9 item scale. Items are taken from Quinn and Shepard's "Global Job Satisfaction Scale" (1974) and Smith, Kendall, Hulin's "Job Descriptive Index" (1969). The Global Job Satisfaction Scale includes four items like "All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job?". The Job Descriptive Index consists of five measures of job satisfaction including satisfaction with work, promotion, supervision, pay and co-workers. Participants were requested to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements using five-point Likert type scales (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree).
Individual characteristics of the respondents including their age, monthly income, organizational tenure (how long they have been working for the organization) and job tenure (how long they have been working in the same position) were measured in terms of numerical expressions. Respondents' gender was measured by a dichotomic question.

4. Analyses and Results

A total of 250 individuals participated in this study by voluntarily filling the online questionnaire. After preliminary analyses, 5 questionnaires were eliminated due to missing and/or careless responses. Remaining 245 questionnaires are coded and entered into a SPSS spreadsheet in order to perform the data analyses. The mean age of subjects was 33,5 years (range:21-60; sd.=7.9) and 64% were male. 57% were married. The mean of their monthly income was 2648 TL. More than 90% of them had a university or higher degree. The average organizational tenure was 6,95 years (range: 1-30; sd.=6.2). The average job tenure was 4,8 years (range: 1-26; sd.=4.3). They were working in a variety of industries including education, higher education, services, banking, finance, automotive and construction.

Before testing the research hypotheses, we made some preliminary analyses to control the dimensionality and reliability of the career motivation scale. Scale dimensionality was controlled by principal component analysis. Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation and a factor extraction according to the MINEIGEN criterion (i.e. all factors with eigenvalues of greater than 1) was employed. Scale reliability was assessed by internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Descriptive statistics showed that research data was appropriate for factor analysis (KMO= 0,722; Bartlett's test of sphericity $p < 0,001$). Principal components analysis suggested five factors for the career motivation scale, which explained 67% of the total variation in the data. Three items were deleted because they showed a weak loading or loaded on several factors. Table 1 shows the remaining items' factor loadings, explained variance by each factor and the Cronbach's Alpha values.

Table 1. Career motivation Scale Principal Components Analysis Results

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha
Factor 1: Career Advancement						
To what extent do you spend your free time on activities that will help your job?	4,07	1,05	0,84			
To what extent have you kept current on company affairs?	4,43	0,87	0,70	4,09	15,38	0,74
To what extent have you joined professional organizations related to your career goal?	3,80	1,17	0,68			
To what extent have you taken courses toward a job-related degree?	4,31	0,94	0,63			
Factor 2: Need for Recognition						
To what extent do you want others to recognize your professional accomplishments?	4,15	1,13	0,92			
To what extent do you want your boss to recognize your professional accomplishments?	4,20	1,14	0,89	2,05	14,03	0,74
To what extent do you want to be in a leadership position?	3,77	1,28	0,54			
Factor 3: Self Awareness						
To what extent do you feel you are aware of what you could do well and could not do well?	4,53	0,69	0,84			
To what extent do you feel you are aware of your skill weaknesses?	4,33	0,76	0,79	1,40	13,57	0,75
To what extent do you feel you are aware of your skill strengths?	4,55	0,67	0,75			
Factor 4: Career Resilience						
To what extent do you feel you are able to adapt to changing circumstances?	4,29	0,84	0,79			
To what extent you looked forward to working with new and different people?	4,34	0,85	0,77	1,29	12,04	0,63
To what extent you feel ready to welcome job and organizational changes?	4,44	0,71	0,63			
Factor 5: Career Awareness						
To what extent do you have specific career goals?	4,22	0,85	0,91	1,21	11,98	0,87
To what extent do you have realistic career goals?	4,21	0,85	0,90			
OVERALL					66,996	0,80

Factor 1, labeled 'Career Advancement' assesses the extent to which an employee spends his free time on activities that will help his job, keeps current on company affairs and joins professional organizations related to his career goals. Factor 2, labeled 'Need for Recognition' assesses the extent to which an employee wants to be recognized by his boss and other colleagues about his professional accomplishments and wants to be in a leadership position. Factor 3, labeled 'Self Awareness' assesses the extent to which an employee is aware of his strengths & weaknesses and what he could do well and could not do well in the workplace. Factor 4, labeled 'Career Resilience', assesses the extent to which an employee can adapt to changing circumstances, look forward to working with new and different people and feel ready to welcome job and organizational changes. Finally, factor 5, labeled 'Career Awareness' assesses the extent to which an employee has specific and realistic career goals. Overall reliability of the scale is good ($\alpha = 0,80$). Except career resilience, all of the sub scales have satisfactory reliability coefficients (above 0,70). Career resilience

subscale has acceptable inter item reliability (α = 0,63). Indeed, a closer look into the extracted factors revealed that career advancement (factor 1) and need for recognition (factor 2) were elements of the career identity component. Self awareness (factor 3) and career awareness (factor 5) were elements of the career insight component. Career resilience (factor 4) was emerged as it was in the original construct. Although these results show slight differences from the original three component structure of the career motivation scale (i.e. insight, identity, resilience) the modified factor structure of the career motivation scale is still useful for descriptive purposes. Hence, items under each factor were averaged and five composite variables corresponding to these subscales were computed for hypotheses testing purposes.

For the "affective commitment scale", principal components analysis suggested a single factor, which explained 67% of the total variance. All of the scale items loaded heavily (from .90 to .72) on the unrotated factor. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated as .93. Thus, a composite measure was created by averaging the responses on the eight items. For the "job satisfaction scale", principal components analysis suggested a single factor, which explained 72% of the total variance. All of the scale items loaded heavily (from .88 to .81) on the unrotated factor. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated as .92. Thus, a composite measure was created by averaging the responses on the four items. Consequently, we computed seven composite variables in order to be used to test the research hypotheses. The means, standard deviations, reliability estimates and interrelations of all variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, and Interrelations of Study Variables

	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Career Motivation General	4,24	0,48							
2 Career Advancement	4,15	0,76	,792**						
3 Need for Recognition	4,47	0,58	,528**	,255**					
4 Self Awareness	4,04	0,96	,683**	,417**	0,097				
5 Career Resilience	4,36	0,61	,564**	,294**	,282**	,170**			
6 Career Awareness	4,21	0,80	,560**	,311**	,310**	,184**	,234**		
7 Affective Commitment	3,52	1,07	,357**	,303**	,126*	,296**	,203**	,132*	
8 Job Satisfaction	3,41	0,92	,294**	,254**	,163*	,205**	,130*	,151*	,690**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As seen in Table 2, all of the career motivation subscales and the overall career motivation scale have significantly positive correlations with affective commitment. Thus, our first hypothesis (H1) proposing a positive relationship between career motivation and affective commitment is supported. In addition, all of the career motivation subscales and the overall career motivation scale have significantly positive correlations with job satisfaction, too. Thus, our second hypothesis (H2) proposing a positive relationship between career motivation and job satisfaction is also supported. Among other elements, career advancement demonstrates the highest correlation with affective commitment and job satisfaction.

In order to examine the association between career motivation and respondents' gender we performed independent samples t test. Analyses results revealed that there were significant differences between male and female respondents' career motivation scores. Females attained a higher career motivation score (M= 4,38) than males (M=4,17), (t243 = 3,347, p<0,001). Further, females attained significantly higher scores on need for recognition (M_{Female}=4,66; M_{Male}=4,36; t243 = 3,96, p<0,001) and self awareness (M_{Female}=4,24; M_{Male}=3,93; t243 = 2,48, p<0,05) subscales. But no significant differences were found between males and females regarding their scores on career advancement, career resilience and career awareness subscales. In order to examine the associations between career motivation and respondents' age, monthly income, organizational and job tenure we performed bivariate correlation analyses between the variables. However, we could not find sufficient evidence to document significant relationships between career motivation scores, and respondents' age, income and tenure. Thus, the last hypothesis proposing that individual characteristics affect the career motivation is supported only for the gender (H3a supported). We could not find enough evidence to show the other variables' impact on career motivation scores (H3b, H3c, H3d, H3e are not supported).

5. Conclusion

In this study, we examined the relationships between career motivation, affective commitment and job satisfaction. We also examined the association between career motivation and some individual characteristics. For this aim, we collected data from a convenience sample of employees working in various industries. Respondents' career motivation, their level of affective commitment and job satisfaction are measured by multi item scales. Factor structure of the career motivation scale was analyzed by principal component analysis. Factor analysis revealed five factors corresponding to the three components of career motivation (career identity, career insight and career resilience). Correlations among the variables are tested in order to understand the bivariate relationships. It is found that, career motivation is significantly positively correlated with affective commitment and job satisfaction. Further, it is found that career motivation scores significantly differed according to respondents' gender. Female respondents attained higher career motivation scores compared to their male counterparts. However, other individual characteristics (age, income level, tenure) did not exert any significant associations with career motivation.

This study's findings presented important aspects for managers to analyze concerning organizational behavior. An important implication of these findings is that, they demonstrate a positive relationship between career motivation and organizational commitment. Since employee commitment was highly related to the attendance of workers and there is a positive relationship between commitment and extra role behavior, establishing and improving employee commitment is an important goal of human resources management practices. In our study, career motivation is also found to be positively correlated to affective commitment. Yet considering the positive relationship between career motivation and job satisfaction, we recommend human resources managers to find ways to enhance, develop and support career motivation among their employees. Providing positive reinforcement for good performance, giving opportunities for achievement, supporting career development and providing job challenges may help developing career motivation among employees (London & Bray, 1984; London & Mone, 1987).

Limitations of the current study should be noted. First of all, it was conducted with the use of a convenience sample in a contrived setting. There is a need to replicate this research with the use of more representative random samples. Since the sample was not random, responses may have been elicited from more cooperative people, and their responses may have been influenced by social desirability. Future studies would gain external validity by using probability samples of wider populations. Because this study was cross-sectional, causality cannot be inferred. However, the results of our model provide some preliminary support for the relationship between career motivation

and key employee behavior. Future research may take a longitudinal design to overcome this limitation. In general, additional work is needed to examine the construct validity of the career motivation and its relationship with the employee attitudes and behavior within the Turkish context.

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