

Is Leadership Motivation Affected by Career Orientation? A Case Study of Malaysian Youth in Public Universities

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Abstract

This paper aim to determine the relationship between career orientations and leadership motivation among Malaysian youth. Data were collected from 711 undergraduate students from five Malaysian public universities. Results showed that some career anchors correlated significantly with motivation to lead (MTL) with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.1 to 0.4. Results of Regression analysis revealed that the General Management career anchor is the biggest predictor of MTL followed by Pure Challenge. The findings suggest that not all the career anchors contribute significantly in explaining the variation of MTL. Based on R² value, the career orientations explain about 27.9% of the variance in the MTL. The findings from this study could help policy makers in developing youth career program.

Keywords: career orientation, career anchor, leadership motivation, youth career, youth leadership

1. Introduction

Career orientation or career anchor refers to an individual's self-perceived needs, values, and talents that give shape to his or her career decisions (Schein, 1971, 1975; DeLong, 1982; Ginzberg & Baroudi, 1992; Igbaria et al., 1991). The career anchor or career orientation is significant because it influences career choices, affects decisions to move from one job to another, shapes what one is looking for in life, determines an individual's view of the future, influences the selection of particular occupations and work settings, and affects the employee's reactions to his or her work experiences (Schein, 1975). Career anchors focus on the individual's self-concept and career values. In today's society, being successful in career involves the ability to orientate one's abilities to become more congruent with the demands of more complex work demands. Literature in career orientations mainly focuses on the choice of the individual self with respect to his/her preference for the career type, and openness to accept the various requisites of that career. On the other hand, motivation to lead (MTL) is a desire to provide service to others, to enrich group experience or to initiate some desired change (Astin & Astin, 2000). Leadership is not however restricted to those individuals in positional power. Instead, leadership resides in any individual who has the motivation and the willingness to initiate and to implement change and transformation within the group or community that he/she belongs and to help others achieve goals that the group aspires (Astin & Astin, 2000). Although taking up leadership is an individual's choice, its form and practice is located as a social phenomenon (Whitehead, 2009). Therefore the question arises if career orientations are exclusively choices of individuals, can it be related to a form of practice that is predominantly social and people-related in nature, such as leadership?

Considering that youth are the biggest source of human capital and the future leader of every nation in the world, this study seeks to examine relationship between career orientation and leadership motivation of youth in Malaysia. This study set out to determine the relationship between career orientation as conceptualized by Schein (1990) and motivation to lead proposed by Chan and Drasgow (2001) among Malaysian youth. Here, the research question is that, is there any relationship between young people's interests in the content of jobs and the leading roles that they might play in a job? To address this aim, we begin with a literature on career orientation and motivation to lead.

1.1 Literature Review

1.1.1 Career Orientation

The concept of career orientation or career anchors offers valuable insights in understanding diversity in career preferences and career patterns (Rodrigues & Guest, 2010). Career anchors are regarded as an important aspect of individuals' career self-concept, which provides clarity of career values, motives, interests and needs (Schein, 1990). Schein (1978) defined career anchors as a pattern of self-perceived talents and abilities, basic personal values and an evolved sense of motives and needs that influence a person's career-related decisions. According to Schein (1996) these self-perceived ability, talents, and values represent the person career's identity. Schein (1978, 1990, and 1996) suggests that most people's career orientation (self-perceived talents and abilities, motives and values) are grounded in eight career anchors. However, Feldman and Bolino (1996) categorized Schein's eight career anchors into three distinct groupings as being talents-based, needs-based and values-based anchors. The talents-based anchors consist of managerial competence, technical/functional competence, and entrepreneurial creativity. The needs-based anchors consist of security and stability, autonomy and independence and lifestyle. The values-based anchors consist of pure challenge, service, and dedication to a cause. According to Schein (1990), people's career anchors tend to develop over time. Self-concept continuously evolves based on the insight gained through knowledge and experience (Schein, 2006; Super, 1990). Coetzee et al. (2010) also found that people's career anchors significantly predict their job and career satisfaction.

1.1.2 Edgar Schein's Career Anchors

According to Schein (1990), eight career anchors themes can enable people to recognize their preferences areas in their job, which can help career-planning. People are fulfilled in their careers when they can satisfy their career anchors and seek roles that are aligned with these. Research by Schein (1978, 1990, and 1996) suggests that most people's career self-concepts (motives and values) are grounded in eight categories or anchors:

1) Technical/Functional

People career anchor are strongly placed in some technical area; seek for the opportunity to apply their skills in that area and to develop those skills to higher level. These people most motivated towards being very knowledgeable in some field of specialization. These people derive their sense of identity from the practicing of their skills and are most happy when their work allows them to challenge in those areas. They will seek higher levels of challenge within their skill area, and may go into administration or management in that particular skill area. But they will resist general or generic management because that would require them to drop the exercise of their talented skills. Based on this, we form our first research hypothesis:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between technical/functional career anchors and MTL.

2) Autonomy/Independence

These people want work demands and life commitments to be under their own control. They resist organizational routines, rules, uniforms, hours of work. These people always look for opportunity to define their own work in their own way. They prefer to remain in jobs that allow them flexibility regarding when and how to work. They turn down opportunities for promotion or advancement in order to retain autonomy. Because they tend to be individualistic and project empathy for the needs of other individuals when working in a team, they would find it difficult to mobilize and bond a team of people within a tight frame of regular routine, standard procedures, and common expectations of outcomes. This raises our third hypothesis:

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between Autonomy/Independence career anchors and MTL.

3) Service/Dedication to a Cause

These people would not give up the opportunity to pursue work that achieves something of value, such as making the world a better place to live, solving environmental problems, improving harmony among people, helping others. They would pursue such opportunities even if it means changing organizations. The service dedicated people find their calling to serve for a certain cause, rather than to serve in the organization. For this reason, they may not aspire to any positions or power to lead, but are content to be in service of others. Thus our sixth hypothesis is:

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between Service/Dedication to a Cause career anchor and MTL.

4) General Management

Individuals with this career anchor want to be responsible and accountable for total results and they identify their own work with the success of the organization for which they work. They want to rise to a high level in an

organization where they can measure their own competence by the performance of the organization that they manage. Their ambition is to get to be a generalist, overseeing the success story of the organization. Their basic identity and sense of success will come through the success of the organization they work for. They want to be able to oversee the strategic planning and execution of the organization to ensure its success. Moreover, according to Suutari and Taka (2004) who studied career anchors of leaders through a qualitative research setting, most leaders saw that their career decisions are based on two or even three career anchors instead of one dominating anchor. However, the most typical career anchors in their original career choice were managerial competence and pure challenge. This forms the basis of our next hypothesis:

Ha₁: There is significant relationship between general management career anchor and MTL.

5) Security/Stability

Persons whose key careers anchor are security/stability would not give up employment security or tenure in an organization. His/her value is illustrated through the need for financial security (such as pension and retirement plans) or employment security. The person primarily and is always concerned about jobs that will make her/him feel economically secure and stable. Persons who value security as a career anchor might perceive leadership as a means to increase stability in the job, and indeed, being able to rise to a leadership position reflects upon the stability of one's status in the organization. Thus, our research hypothesis is:

Ha₂: There is significant relationship between security/stability career anchors and MTL.

6) Entrepreneurial Creativity

What these people want is to create an organization or enterprise of their own, built on their own abilities and willingness to take risks to overcome obstacles. They want to prove to the world that they can create an enterprise that is the result of their own effort. If they are working for others in an organization, they are always assessing opportunities for further and they will go out on their own as soon as they feel they can manage it. Because they prefer to be in the front line and making important decisions and willing to take risks, these people are more likely to want to take the lead, rather than be a follower. Hence, our hypothesis is:

Ha₃: There is significant relationship between entrepreneurial creativity career anchor and MTL.

7) Pure Challenge

These groups of people look for the opportunity to work on solutions and overcome difficult obstacles. For them, the only meaningful reason for pursuing a career is that it permits them to succeed in the feat of the impossible such as the professional athlete. They seek novelty, variety, and difficulty and if something is easy, it becomes immediately boring. These people will constantly push themselves and others in their charge to achieve something new and to rise to new challenges. Since they thrive on challenges, it makes sense that they would be driven to want the autonomy to take the lead, rather than be led by others. Given this premise, it is hypothesized that people with a penchant for *pure* challenge will have high MTL. Our hypothesis thus is:

Ha₄: There is significant relationship between Pure Challenge career anchors and MTL.

8) Lifestyle

These people seeking to balance and integrate their personal needs, family needs, and the requirements of their job. They want to make all sectors of their life work together toward an integrated whole. They may have high career aspirations, but would prefer that it comes with a career situation that provides enough flexibility to achieve such integration. They feel that their identity tied up with how they live their total life. Work and achievement are important aspects of their self-identity, as is achieving a balanced life. Leadership is perceived as an enhancement of status and lifestyle, but these people will also strive to achieve a balanced life. Hence our last hypothesis is:

Ha₅: There is significant relationship between Lifestyle career anchors and MTL.

In summary, our research hypotheses are:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between technical/functional career anchors and MTL.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between Autonomy/Independence career anchors and MTL.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between Service/Dedication to a Cause career anchor and MTL.

Ha₁: There is significant relationship between general management career anchor and MTL.

Ha₂: There is significant relationship between security/stability career anchor and MTL.

Ha₃: There is significant relationship between entrepreneurial creativity career anchor and MTL.

Ha4: There is significant relationship between Pure Challenge career anchor and MTL.

Ha5: There is significant relationship between Lifestyle career anchor and MTL.

1.2 Motivation to Lead

Motivation to lead is a desire to provide service to others, to enrich group experience or to initiate some desired change (Astin & Astin, 2000). People might be motivated to develop leadership skills to serve others, to bring about some desired change. According to Abdul Hamid and Krauss (2008), leadership is empowered not only by the formal authority invested through structural positions, but most importantly also by the willingness or “willing spirit” one brings to one’s leadership role. According to Barbuto (2001) although leadership has its challenges, but there is pleasure in being a leader. Good leaders work with the purpose of bringing improvements and gains. Some people become leaders because of the benefits they hope to obtain from leadership roles. According to Krauss and Abdul Hamid (2013), reputation is a strong motivator to seek a leadership position. Chan and Drasgow (2001) did a major work on motivation to lead. According to Chan and Drasgow (2001), motivation to lead is as an ‘individual difference’ constructs affecting the leader’s or future leader’s decision to take on both the role and the responsibilities of leadership. Chan and Drasgow proposed the motivation to lead (MTL) model. The MTL could be conceptualized and measured in terms of three correlated-dimensions: Affective/Identity, Social Normative, and Non-calculative. One person may simply like leading others, hence the affective-identity MTL, whereas others might choose the role of group leader because they feel it is their duty or responsibility, hence the Social-Normative MTL. Individuals who score high on this Affective/Identity MTL dimension prefer to lead others and tend to be outgoing and sociable. They relish all the excitement of the challenge and the risk involved in being a leader. They are confident in their own leadership abilities and find personal satisfaction in leading others to achieve goals. On the other hand, some people may decide to accept a leadership role only if they are not too overly ‘calculative’ regarding the cost-effectiveness of being the leader of a group. Leadership usually implies personal responsibility and/or costs as well as benefits. Non-Calculative MTL measures one’s willingness to take on leadership roles without being too calculative about the costs involved. The more calculative a person is about the costs, the less he or she wishes to take on the leadership role (Hamid & Krauss, 2008; Krauss & Hamid, 2013). Sociocultural values play a more important role in Non-calculative MTL (Chan & Drasgow, 2010).

1.3 Objectives of Study

- 1) To describe demographic profile of respondents.
- 2) To determine respondents’ career orientation and MTL.
- 3) To determine the relationship between career orientation and MTL.
- 4) To determine those career anchors that help to explain variation of MTL.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Five public universities were randomly chosen from four zones of peninsular Malaysia namely USM Penang, UPM Selangor, UTM, UMT, and UPNM. A total of 800 questionnaires were distributed. 764 questionnaires were returned (response rate 95.5%). Of these, 53 questionnaires were excluded from the analysis due to incomplete data (N=711).

2.2 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Prior to conduct study, instrument checked for validity and reliability. Instrument was pilot-tested at one public university. Following pilot-test, some items were modified. Reliability analysis was also performed for each scale. The results of reliability statistics for MTL overall were 0.89 and for career orientation themes were all above 0.70.

2.3 Measuring Leadership Motivation/MTL

In this study, we applied nine items Affective Identity (motivation to lead) MTL construct proposed by Chan and Drasgow (2001). However, the items were all re-worded for clarity and in a positive mode. This was done to suit the level of respondents of the study i.e. undergraduates. MTL can be measured both as three first-order factors and as a single second-order factor (i.e., General MTL). In current study, we chose to capture students’ affective interest in leadership role. Hence, Calculative MTL and Social-Normative MTL were not applied in this research.

2.4 Measuring Carrier Orientations

In the current study, we used Schein (1990) career anchors to measure carrier orientations. Respondents were asked to assess their career anchors based on the eight career orientations in Schein's (1990) model namely; technical competence, managerial competence, security and stability, entrepreneurial creativity, autonomy and independence, service and dedication to a cause; pure challenge and lifestyle. The eight dimensions of career orientation make up a total of 24 items.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Demographic Profiles Respondents (Objective1)

Majority of students 79.3% (n=564) were female and 20.7% (n=147) were male. Regarding the age of sample, 520 (73.1%) of respondents were between 20-24 years old. Academically, 49.8% of the sample had a CGPA of 3.0-3.49, 31.4% had a CGPA of 3.5-4.0, 17.7 had a CGPA of 2.5-2.9 and 1.1% had a CGPA of 2.0-2.49. In terms of academic program, 50.6% were students from the Applied Science including Engineering, Education, Medical and Bio-Technology; 1.1% from Environmental Science including Marine and Geology, 5.5% from Business and Economics and Management; 42.3% from Science cluster and 0.4 %from the IT Communication and Design Graphics cluster. These groups of respondents are merely to indicate the spread of respondents to the reader, and they were not at all used in the data analysis (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic profiles respondents (n=711)

Variable	Category	Frequently	(%)
Gender	male	147	20.7
	female	564	79.3
Age group	16-19	162	22.8
	20-24	520	73.1
	25-29	26	3.7
	30-35	2	0.3
	Above 35	1	0.1
Race	Malay	554	77.9
	Chinese	123	17.3
	Indian	24	3.4
	Others	10	1.4
CGPA	3.5-4.0	223	31.4
	3.0-3.49	354	49.8
	2.5-2.9	126	17.7
	2.0-2.49	8	1.1
Academic program	Applied Science	360	50.6
	Sciences	301	42.3
	Environmental Science	8	1.1
	Business & Economics	39	5.5
	IT Communication and Design Graphics	3	0.4

3.2 Descriptive Analysis of Motivation to Lead and Carrier Orientation (Objective2)

Means, standard deviations, and alpha scores for MTL and career orientation are listed in Table 2. For the MTL mean score was (M=3.44, SD=1.04). For career orientation, the highest mean score of 4.45 (SD=0.57) was for pure challenge and the lowest mean score of (M=3.54, SD=.85) was for general management. The overall pattern seems to show that undergraduates in Malaysia had a high preference for careers that are challenging, and many would avoid general management jobs. Security/stability (M=4.26, SD=.60), service dedication (M=4.26, SD=0.62) and lifestyle (M=4.13, SD=0.62) are the other three dominant career anchors of the participants. These

career orientations fall in the categorization for need-based (lifestyle and security) and value-based (pure challenge and service dedication) orientations. The overall mean of response on MTL were divided into three levels for reporting purpose. Majority of the respondents, 52.6% (n=374) had moderate level of interest in leading others; 38.8 % (n=276) had high level of interest to lead others while 8.6% (n=61) had low level of interest in leading others (Table 3).

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and reliability scores for carrier orientation and MTL (N=711)

Variables	Items	Range	Mean	SD	Alpha
Motivation to lead	6	1-5	3.44	1.04	.89
Independence	3	1-5	4.07	.67	.71
Security	3	1-5	4.26	.60	.75
Technical	3	1-5	4.02	.70	.73
Managerial	3	1-5	3.54	.85	.77
Entrepreneur	3	1-5	3.76	1.0	.90
Service	3	1-5	4.26	.62	.75
Challenging	3	1-5	4.45	.57	.75
Lifestyle	3	1-5	4.13	.62	.75

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of respondents' motivation to lead

Level	Frequency	%
low	61	8.6
Moderate	374	52.6
High	276	38.8
Total	711	100

3.3 Correlations between Carrier Orientation and Motivation to Lead (Objective3)

Table 4, presents the correlation between the eight career anchors and MTL. Pearson correlations coefficient showed that most career orientations were significantly correlated with MTL, with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.1 to 0.4. The correlations between MTL and the career orientations are as follows:

1) Technical

There is a significant but very weak relationship between technical career orientation and MTL ($r=0.159$, $p=.001$). It would appear that most people with technical orientations are also open to the idea of taking up leadership roles. Yet the weak correlation suggests that this willingness to lead may be constrained, perhaps leadership amongst their own kind only, or only when the leadership role demands do not interfere with opportunities to continue to apply and practice their technical skills. Therefore H_{01} is rejected.

2) Autonomy/Independence

There is no significant relationship found between Independence and MTL. H_{02} is accepted.

3) Services/Dedication

Services is also positively but weakly related with MTL ($r=0.145$, $p=.001$). H_{03} is rejected. As we have stated, people with this career orientation pursue work that achieves something of value, but they might also perceive leadership as a means by which they could further expand their services to others. However the weak relationship indicates that there might be other factors that affect the relationship.

4) General Management

General Management career orientation is moderately related to MTL ($r=0.48$, $p=.001$). Hence, H_{a1} is proven. The pattern of relationship suggests that those who like career anchors in generic management are also likely to be motivated to lead others. Since these groups of people show great concern for accountability for the total

results of organization, and they tend identify their own work with the success of the organization, they feel a greater sense of readiness to lead others to uphold to the sense of duty.

5) Security and stability

Security and stability is positively but weakly related with MTL ($r=0.12$, $p=.001$). H_{a2} is proven. People who seek jobs that give them security and stability actually do seem to have interest to lead others, especially is the promotion reflects stability in the job. On the other hand, the need for job stability may compel these people to do whatever the employer wants for the sake of some promise of job tenure and they are willing to forgo their interest in taking leadership. We can conclude that although Security/stability is related to interest in leading, the relationship is however weak due to other factors. In this sense, H_{a2} that states "People with inclination for security/stability career anchor will be significantly related to MTL" is proven.

6) Entrepreneur

There is a significant and positive relationship between this career anchor and MTL ($r=0.28$, $p=.001$). But the relationship is low. One explanation is that, because these individuals prefer to be in the front line and making important decisions and willing to take risks, these people are more likely to want to take the lead, rather than be a follower. Thus H_{a3} is proven. However, leadership role comes with some costs and role constraints, and these might contribute to the low relationship.

7) Pure Challenge

Challenging is also positively related with MTL ($r=0.293$, $p=.001$), but the relationship is weak. It might be argued that even while these people have the desire to lead others to take on new challenges, they may also have some reservations with regards to the role expectations and role accountability that come with the leadership position. Nevertheless H_{a4} is proven.

8) Lifestyle

There is no significant relationship was found between Life style with MTL. It seems that people whose career anchor focused on a balanced life between career, personal and family needs are not likely to become motivated to be leaders. Here H_{a5} is rejected.

In summary, people with career anchors in Autonomy/Independence and Balanced Lifestyle have no significant relationship with MTL. All the rest of career anchors had significant relationship with MTL. Autonomy/Independence and Lifestyle are classified as needs-based (Feldman & Bolino, 1996) anchors. It would appear that people whose career anchors are needs-driven are motivated mainly by their own personal needs agenda, and are less interested in taking on extended responsibilities as leaders in their work place. In contrast, those whose career anchors lie in values and talent are more motivated to take on leadership, and this is most likely because they are driven either by the need to achieve or create new frontiers, or to find avenues to materialize the values they uphold in more concrete, substantive and broader manifestations. This would have implications on how leadership training is to be conducted amongst varied groups of people with different anchor bases.

3.4 Regression of Career Orientation on Motivation to Lead (Objective 4)

Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) was applied to gain a better understanding of career anchors that help to explain variation of motivation to lead (Table 5). Based on the method used, only two predictor variables were found to be significant in explaining MTL, that are, General Management ($t=11.751$, $p=0.000$) and Pure Challenge ($t=4.847$, $p=0.000$). As illustrated in Table 4, General Management explains 44% of the variation (Beta coefficient 0.44), while Pure Challenge explains 11% of the variation in MTL (Beta coefficient 0.11).

Results showed that General Management career anchor is the biggest predictor of MTL among undergraduate students, followed by Pure Challenge career anchor. In other words General Management makes the strongest unique contribution to MTL when the variance explained by all other predictors is controlled. The other five career anchors are not significant in explaining MTL. The R^2 value of the model is 0.279 which implies that General Management and Pure Challenge explain about 27.9% of the variance/variation in the MTL. Although the model is of moderate strength, nevertheless it alerts us to the ways patterns of career orientations may predict young people's motivation to become leaders.

Table 4. Pearson correlations coefficient of the variables

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
(1)Motivation to lead	1.00								
(2)Independence	.035	1.00							
(3)Security	.123**	.275**	1.00						
(4)Technical	.159**	.260**	.292**	1.00					
(5)Management	.487**	.231**	.175**	.313**	1.00				
(6)Entrepreneur	.280**	.219**	.159**	.315**	.443**	1.00			
(7)Service	.145**	.215**	.321**	.256**	.205**	.343**	1.00		
(8)Challenging	.293**	.150**	.327**	.320**	.277**	.295**	.464**	1.00	
(9)Lifestyle	.051	.332**	.437**	.254**	.100**	.180**	.443**	.361**	1.00

Table 5. Estimates of coefficients for the model coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.476	.273		5.406	.000
Independence	-.115	.043	-.094	-2.646	.088
Security	.048	.050	.035	.954	.341
Technical	-.035	.042	-.030	-.819	.413
General Management	.423	.036	.438	11.751	.000
Entrepreneur	.057	.031	.070	1.843	.066
Service	-.029	.052	-.022	-.548	.584
Challenging	.249	.051	.188	4.847	.000
Lifestyle	-.057	.056	-.040	-1.004	.316

Notes: R=.528; R²=.279; Adj. R²=.271

4. Conclusion

Overall, the findings showed that certain career orientation correlated with the MTL. Our study showed that undergraduate in Malaysia have high preference for general management and pure challenge career anchors. Students with managerial and challenging career anchors expected to behave as leader. The findings suggest that the certain career motives and values underlying the participants' career orientations significantly influence MTL. In other words, those students seeking for challenging job or managerial job are motivated to lead others. Individuals who have a strong managerial and challenge career anchor are often expected to behave as leader, and they respond by being motivated to take the initiative to lead. This is in line with the finding of study conducted by Suutari and Taka (2004) who discovered that the two dimensions of career orientation namely; managerial competence and pure challenge are the most common anchors among managers. Technical-functional career anchors, autonomy and independence, security and stability, and entrepreneurial creativity anchors were all rare anchors among global managers. Organizations need managers whom can count on to provide leadership and to provide direction to workgroups through times of change, to make tough decisions, and to focus efforts productively on the most important tasks. Therefore, managers must be motivated to lead since their motivation translates directly into productivity and team effectiveness. Overall, it can be concluded that the values and motives underpinning participants' choice of career anchors in general management and pure challenge motivate them to lead others.

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