Exploring the Relationships between Contemporary Career Orientations and Atypical Employment

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Abstract. In a dynamic environment, enterprises increase organization flexibility and reduce labor costs are important tactics to maintain competitive advantages. Contemporary organizations reduce the employment of permanent employees, and they are hiring more contracted workers, outsourcing and other atypical ways to obtain required labor productivity. The reasons gradually result in changing of human resources structure of supply and demand in the labor market, and atypical employment has turned to a high usage of enterprises human strategy in Taiwan. People’s choice of career influenced by individual career orientation, besides, individual career orientation is also an important factor to affect intention of atypical employment. In the recent 10 years, two types of new career orientations have emerged: the boundaryless career orientation and the protean career orientation. The data results show that boundaryless career orientation and protean career orientation had significant effects on the university students’ intention to accept atypical employment in the 358 valid questionnaires.

Keywords: Atypical Employment, Boundaryless Career, Protean Career, Career Management.

1. Introduction

Under the environmental influence of globalization, internationalization and liberalization, enterprises achieve their required labor productivity by cutting back permanent employees and undertaking outsourcing or hiring atypical employees such as short-term temporary or contracted workers, to maintain their competitiveness. This leads to the gradual change in human resources structure as well as the supply and demand in the labor market. Apart from the rising demand of enterprises, the change in the supply of labor is also one of the key factors. The values and lifestyles of people in modern society are highly diverse. Due to different employment patterns, people can utilize their working hours more flexibly and pursue their goals of self-realization. Atypical employment helps provide an effective alternative career strategy for modern-day people. The rising demand from enterprise, change of labor concept and government policies all contribute to the huge increase in the demand of atypical employment.

Amid the rapid changing environment, organizations tend not to offer long-term and stable employment relationship. From a positive point of view, employees can accumulate different work experiences through various jobs to create energy for future development, achieving satisfaction between life and work. Changing environment leads to constant emergence of new forms of organization, shifting away from stable organization to shamrock organization, network organization and virtual organization. The common feature of these organizations is their dynamic form and structure.

This research examines the two career orientations which have been developed for the past 10 years, i.e. boundaryless career orientation and protean career orientation, have certain effects on the increasing intention to hire atypical employees. According to scholars (e.g. Bird, 1994; Inkson, 2002; Pringle and Mallon, 2003; Sullivan, 1999; Briscoe, Hall and DeMuth, 2006; Hall, 1996; Hall, Briscoe and Kram, 1997), there are clear differences between the ideas of boundaryless career and protean career orientations. However, the lack of precise definitions in the past rendered it difficult to distinguish these two. In short, all new career concepts emphasize that individuals are not restricted by a single organization. Individuals are the leading actors who should be responsible for their own career.
2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Atypical Employment

The definition of atypical employment can be elaborated by way of typical employment, i.e. full-time work, continuous employment, completion of assigned work contents inside the enterprise of the employer and receiving employer’s supervision and instruction. They are generally referred to as permanent employees. Thus, any employment relationship which is not based on continuity or full time in nature is deemed as atypical employment.

Kalleberg (2000) indicated that atypical employee was not employed by a single employer or enterprise on a full-time or continuous basis. Axel (1995) categorized contingent employment into two categories, temporary workers directly hired by enterprise and temporary labor provided by staffing company. Temporary workers directly hired by enterprise can be further divided into temporary worker of short-term assignments, on-call worker, part-time worker and independent contractor. Workers provided by staffing company are separated into temporary help worker and long-term leased employee. Segal and Sullivan (1997) pointed out that the most likely causes why most enterprises hired atypical workers were: temporary increase in business, need of short-term project, substitute for absent permanent employee, reduction of labor costs and lack of certain technical specialist.

Although there is stereotype on atypical employees, such as low loyalty to organization, passive working attitude as well as lack of professional quality, enterprises’ hiring of atypical workers creates a sense of crisis in permanent employees and thus push them to work hard. An enterprise needs to help atypical employees become familiar with the mission, vision and value of the organization and understand their own motives, needs and objectives. Furthermore, efforts should be made to help atypical employees integrate into the organization so as to devote to their work and be stimulated to release full potential. An enterprise should create a sense of security to enhance the loyalty of atypical employees to the organization. This will facilitate the organization’s cultivation of talents in the long term. The research included temporary workers, dispatched workers, contractors and overseas part-time workers to help analyze atypical employment.

2.2. Boundaryless Career

Arthur and Rousseau (1996) pointed out from a career essence point of view that since the essence of career underwent changes in response to dynamic work environment, boundaryless career became a principle, not an exception. Employees were not bound by a single organization, nor were their careers arranged by organizations. He advocated that employees had to free themselves from boundary of organizations or enterprises in planning their own career. DeFillippi and Arthur (1996) viewed boundaryless career as career accumulated from several opportunities across organizations and boundaries. In addition, he believed that mobility existed between enterprises.

The model of boundaryless career orientation is built upon two types of mobility, namely physical mobility and psychological mobility. Physical mobility refers to that an individual physically crosses different professions, enterprises, industries or countries. Psychological mobility means that an employee does not physically cross different professions, enterprises, industries or countries. They only cross organizational boundary on a psychological level (Sullivan and Arthur, 2006).

Previous studies have focused on physical mobility between jobs, employers and industries, and so on, because physical mobility is more easily to measure than psychological mobility. Sullivan and Arthur (2006) combined with two types of mobility, in accordance with physical and psychological level (high/low) of mobility, divided boundaryless career into four quadrants of careers. According to the four quadrants made suitable career. Different work environment and accumulation of experiences explain why the combination of physical mobility and psychological mobility can help an employee adapt to the existing job arrangement.

2.3. Protean Career

Hall proposed protean career orientation in 1976. He viewed protean career orientation as a psychological concept, and suggested that when the environment changes, one should change his or her career accordingly, put emphasis on self-management and self-esteem, keep learning and search for stimulus.
at work to maintain and enhance one’s competitiveness in the workplace. Hall’s view drew a great deal of attention from researchers (Hall, 1976). He described a protean person as a person taking initiative to pursue his or her goals and discover his or her own career choice who at the same time emphasizes psychological success rather than salary or job title. It was the protean person who was managing his or her career, not the organization (Hall, 2002).

Briscoe and Hall (2002) indicated that the features of protean career orientation included self-directed and values-driven. Self-directed refers to an individual who independently manages his or her career behaviors, has his or her own ideas, principles, objectives as well as self-directions, and eventually takes actions so as to adapt and manage the current career. Values-driven means that an employee has clear internal values which guide the individual’s career principle and success criteria (Briscoe and Hall, 2006). These psychological values will not be compromised due to job title, salary and promotion.

3. Research Method

The purpose of this research is to examine whether the intention of university students to accept atypical employment is affected by certain ideas in their career management. In terms of the constructs of protean and boundaryless career orientation, a total of 27 questions proposed by Briscoe (2005) were used for measurement. Five-point Likert response scales were used to gather the data with a response of 5 indicating centrally important or strongly agree to 1 indicating of no important or strongly disagree. After the design of the questionnaire was completed, a pre-test was performed to avoid the occurrence of ambiguity and inadequate question item. SPSS software was used to help analyze the data. University students were the research subjects. 369 questionnaires were returned among which 358 were valid after the elimination of invalid questionnaires.

Reliability analysis of the questionnaires was estimated by Cronbach’s α with the results around 0.7. This showed a roughly acceptable internal consistency. Convergent validity and discriminant validity were used for construct validity analysis. Convergent validity mainly tests the degree of relation between the variables and the constructs while discriminant validity tests the discriminative effects between different constructs (Kerlinger, 1986). Item-to-total correlation was used to assess the convergent validity of the measurement instruments. Factor analysis for discriminate validity was conducted. The validity of items under each variable also displayed good construct validity since all correlation coefficients were above 0.5 and 92.3% factor loadings were above 0.5.

4. Research Findings

The findings from data analysis show that university students have more intention to work as dispatched workers (82.9%) and part-time workers abroad (86.3%). They have lower intention to work as temporary (43%) and contracted workers (69.5%). The intention of students to work as dispatched workers is consistent with the utilization of dispatched workers by enterprises through staffing company or outsourcing. The students’ intention to work as part-time workers abroad is also consistent with the popular practice by Taiwanese young people to undertake working holidays.

In these two career orientations, university students scored higher average points in boundaryless career orientation with 3.625 points opposed to 3.477 in protean career orientation. In order to establish the degree of relationships between boundaryless career orientation, protean career orientation and intention to accept atypical employment, this research conducts Pearson correlation coefficient test (Table 1). In part of boundaryless career and protean career, protean career orientation, boundaryless career orientation and atypical employment (dispatched workers, overseas part-time workers) have significant positive correlation. Boundaryless career orientation and atypical employment (dispatched workers, overseas part-time workers) have significant positive correlation. In addition, boundaryless career opposed to atypical employment (temporary workers) has significant negative correlation.
Table 1: Pearson correlation coefficient between protean career, boundaryless career, and atypical employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint items</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
<th>6.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protean career</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundaryless career</td>
<td>.410**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atypical employment</td>
<td>.126*</td>
<td>.132*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary workers</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>-.128*</td>
<td>.719**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractors workers</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.793**</td>
<td>.603**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispatched workers</td>
<td>.153**</td>
<td>.194**</td>
<td>.752**</td>
<td>.312**</td>
<td>.490**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas part-time workers</td>
<td>.199**</td>
<td>.242**</td>
<td>.647**</td>
<td>.180**</td>
<td>.244**</td>
<td>.412**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: **p<0.01; ***p<0.05

In order to examine the degree of relationships between boundaryless career orientation, protean career orientation and intention of university students to accept atypical employment, multiple regression analysis technique was used. The results showed in Table 2.

Table 2: Intention analysis between boundaryless career orientation and protean career orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint items</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>R-Square</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients β</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atypical employment</td>
<td>Boundaryless career</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>1.684</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protean career</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>1.494</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>0.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary workers</td>
<td>Boundaryless career</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>-0.332</td>
<td>-2.220</td>
<td>-0.128</td>
<td>0.027*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protean career</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractors workers</td>
<td>Boundaryless career</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>1.076</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protean career</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>0.621</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispatched workers</td>
<td>Boundaryless career</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.385</td>
<td>2.764</td>
<td>0.157</td>
<td>0.006**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protean career</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.223</td>
<td>1.558</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas part-time workers</td>
<td>Boundaryless career</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.525</td>
<td>3.433</td>
<td>0.193</td>
<td>0.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protean career</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.338</td>
<td>2.148</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>0.032*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Boundaryless career orientation has significant negative effects on students’ intention to work as temporary workers. Boundaryless career orientation has significant positive effects on students’ intention to work as dispatched workers. Both boundaryless career orientation and protean career orientation have significant positive effects on the students’ intention to undertake overseas part-time workers. In terms of temporary work, it shows that the higher the boundaryless career orientation is, the lower intention the students will have to accept temporary work and the less likely they will work as temporary workers. This may be caused by the students’ concern for lack of legal protection in workplace or their own lack of basic skills. They expect training to enhance their capabilities. In terms of dispatched work, the higher the boundaryless career orientation is, the higher intention the students will have to accept dispatched work and the more likely they will work as dispatched workers. They may want to accumulate work experiences through different job contents. With respect to overseas part-time workers, higher boundaryless career orientation and protean career orientation of the students means higher student intention to work as overseas part-time workers. Apart from the recent popular trend of working holiday, it also illustrates that students want to utilize experiences gained from overseas part-time workers to search and ascertain future orientations so as to attain inner satisfaction and success. This study analyzed demographic, and results showed that only gender has significant impact on atypical employment; women's average are larger than males.

5. Conclusion

According to the research findings, both boundaryless career orientation and protean career orientation have significant effects on the students’ intention to accept some atypical employment. The higher the
university students’ boundaryless career orientation and protean career orientation is, the higher intention they will have to work as overseas part-time workers. It is likely that they expect to understand themselves or ascertain future work orientations through overseas work experience. In terms of temporary work, the higher the university students’ boundaryless career orientation is, the lower intention they will have to accept temporary employment. This may be because university students do not feel secured to work in a workplace which lacks proper legal protection. Regarding dispatched work, the higher the university students’ boundaryless career orientation is, the higher intention they will have to accept the dispatch. It is likely that they want to cultivate their capabilities by way of different work experiences.

The research samples were only selected from students of the National United University who participated in the questionnaire survey. Thus, the research has its limitation in geographical implication. It is recommended that future researches may expand the scope of survey by including atypical employees and current employees into the questionnaire survey. Different work characteristics may lead to varying results in these two career orientations. Moreover, factors like work attitude and personal quality may be examined to establish their effects on the two career orientations. Additionally, the question items used in this research are translated from foreign language so there may be language and cultural differences. It is recommended that future researchers may design their own question items to make the researches even more flawless.

6. References


