Jurnal Pendidikan Bisnis dan Manajemen, Volume 9, Number 1, July 2023, Pages 14–25

Predictors of Protean Career for Millennial Workers: The Impact on Career Resilience and Career Satisfaction

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Abstract: A contemporary career model, the protean career has offered an alternative for career development in the workplace, especially for the millennials. This study aims to analyze the core self-evaluation and emotional intelligence as the predictors of protean career and the impacts on career resilience and career satisfaction. Online survey from 260 millennials who work in various industries were analyzed to develop an integrative career model, by using partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The results of the study indicated core self-evaluation and emotional intelligence as predictors that have a significant effect on protean careers. In addition, the research found the significant effect of protean career on career resilience, also the significant effect of career resilience on career satisfaction. This study contributes to the development of career literature through a contemporary approach that emphasizes the individual role in career development. This study also provides managerial implications, where managers need to consider emotional intelligence in the recruitment process and encourage employees' ability to evaluate themselves for career success.

Keywords: Core self-evaluation, Emotional intelligence, Protean career, Career resilience, Career satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Rapid technological advancements, globalization, global economic recession, reorganization, downsizing, and labor market fluctuations make career management difficult and unpredictable for everyone. This has given rise to a career pattern known as the protean career, which is distinct from traditional careers in general. This new career pattern is characterized by disruption, non-linearity, self-direction, and a values-driven emphasis on individual accountability for career advancement (Hall, 2004; Lochab & Nath, 2020). In the pursuit of psychological success, the protean career reflects the exercise of self-direction and a focus on intrinsic values (Hall et al., 2018).

Literature on career suggests that protean career earns substantive acknowledgment and remains an area of interest for many researchers (De Vos & Soens, 2008; Herrmann et al., 2015; Lochab & Nath, 2020). A focus on the protean career differs from other career perspectives focusing on the roles of environment and socialization in shaping individual work choices (Hall et al., 2018). Furthermore, Hall et al. (2018) argued that the concept of the protean career offers an agentic role for individuals, along with another unique concept of the protean career which is an internal motivation afforded by individuals' intrinsic values as motivating sources of agency.

The notion of the protean career as an attitude that reflects a personal sense of agency argues that individuals will be involved in controlling their careers if they

Article info: Received: 23 December 2022 Revised: 08 January 2023 Accepted: 13 February 2023
Permalink/DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17977/um003v9i12023p014

adopt this attitude (De Vos & Soens, 2008). A number of studies have identified predictors of the protean career which stem from the individual's self, that is core self-evaluation and emotional intelligence, among others. Core self-evaluation (CSE) is highly relevant to career management as individuals with high CSE are assumed to be more ambitious and confident in their career and are more actively involved in career planning, which is started from themselves and job exploration and search (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011). Besides, individuals with high CSE are associated with choosing and pursuing goals at work that are relevant to them (Judge et al., 2005), and high CSE can contribute to values-driven approaches to career management.

Emotional intelligence (EI) also plays a crucial role in predicting career success (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2011; Kidd, 1998). EI includes the ability to understand one's own emotions (self-emotional appraisal), the ability to identify the emotions of others (others-emotional appraisal), the competence to devise emotions by directing them for constructive activities and self-performance (use of emotion), and the ability to regulate emotion (Wong & Law, 2017). The relationship between EI and protean career orientation can be explained through self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT divides motives and individual values into two, that is intrinsic and extrinsic ones, in which several motives and values are strongly related to well-being.

Motives and intrinsic values have the potential to result in satisfaction because they reflect psychological growth and self-actualization (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-actualization necessitates a high level of emotional intelligence so that those with a high EI will have a greater sense of self (Spence et al., 2004). Protean careers are also associated with feelings of inner self-actualization and fulfillment (Hall & Moss, 1998). Therefore, individuals must possess a crucial competency, self-awareness, for a protean career orientation (Hall, 2004). This awareness is the primary trait of EI, so individuals with high EI are anticipated to have a high protean career orientation.

Individuals with highly protean careers are guided by their values (values-driven) and assume independent responsibilities for their vocational behavior (self-directed). Protean careers have the potential to enhance individual career resilience or the capacity to face and overcome career obstacles successfully (Abu-Tineh, 2011). Individuals with a strong orientation toward a protean career do not suffer from changes in the external environment because they manage their careers. In the context of career development, resilience has thus far received less consideration (Bimrose & Hearne, 2012). The findings of a study conducted by Lyons et al. (2015) support the claim that a protean career orientation positively impacts career resilience. Previous studies have revealed that career resilience is associated with career self-management (Chiaburu et al., 2006) and career change behavior (Carless & Bernath, 2007).

Career resilience is the process by which an individual's career endures, adapts, and/or develops despite various challenges, changing circumstances, and occasional disruptions (Mishra & McDonald, 2017). It is believed that individuals with high career resilience also have a high level of career satisfaction. This is due to the fact that the more resilient (high resilience) a person is in the face of various obstacles and challenges in their career, the more likely they are to survive and

achieve their career objectives (London, 1983). Individuals are consequently more satisfied with their career advancement. The findings of Lyons et al. (2015) and Peeters et al. (2022) also indicate that career resilience is a significant predictor of career satisfaction.

In the context of the millennial generation in the workplace, the protean career is an attractive career model because it emphasizes the importance of the individual in career advancement through self-direction and a values-driven approach. Individuals born between 1980 and 2000, or millennials, have different expectations and career goals than previous generations (Aydogmus, 2019). It is argued that the majority of millennials lead a materialistic lifestyle, which is characterized by a self-focused orientation (Arnett, 2007). For these millennials, appreciating their job is more crucial than remuneration (Maxwell et al., 2007). While the concept of the protean career has gained substantial recognition and interest, empirical research on this topic is still in its infancy (Herrmann et al., 2015). Inkson (2006) has challenged the protean career metaphor, in which this model not be taken too literally. More research on new careers, including the protean career, is needed to get empirical findings (Briscoe & Finklestein, 2009). Thus, further research on how protean career affect various work-related outcomes is called for.

This research contributes to the protean career literature through the development of an integrative protean career model by identifying predictors of the protean career which come from internal individuals, i.e., CSE and EI, as well as analyzing the influence of protean career on career resilience and career satisfaction. To present, EI is considered as an important determinant of career success (Poon, 2004), but its validity is still based on conceptual work, mostly involving theorization. There is a research gap on the mechanism underlying how EI affects protean careers, especially among millennial workers. Thus, this study tries to fill the research gap. In addition, previous studies have not revealed how important personality dispositions such as CSE and EI affect protean careers, which then impact career resilience and determine career satisfaction. In relation to career resilience, this study offers novelty by showing how career resilience is determined by a new career attitude, namely the protean career.

This study attempts to develop a protean career model by investigating individual personal factors as predictors and analyzing the impact of protean careers on career outcomes. Existing research focuses primarily on external influences rather than the contemporary career perspective that stresses the role of the individual. Primarily, this study examined the influence of core self-evaluation and emotional intelligence as predictors of protean careers and the impact of protean career on career resilience and career satisfaction.

METHODS

Participants and Procedures

Respondents to this study were millennial workers from various industrial sectors. They are characterized by being self-focused, optimistic, independent, and life-loving. This generation values meaningful work and views lifelong learning as a top priority. Utilizing the snowball sampling technique, researchers contacted

acquainted millennial employees and inquired about their willingness to participate in the research. The researchers then requested recommendations from other millennial employees who could be contacted and were willing to participate in the study. Respondents who participated in this study were employees in the age range of 20–40 years, as defined by Gulyani and Bhatnagar (2017) regarding the millennial generation, which was born in the 1980s and after. They worked in various industries in Java. Consequently, the sampling procedure was continued until 260 participants were recruited for this study. Of these, 227 respondents filled out the questionnaire completely, indicating a response rate of 87%. The majority of respondents were female (56.92%), with the remainder being male (43.08%). The majority of respondents reported having a master's degree (46.15%), a bachelor's degree (41.54%), a doctorate (6.15%), a diploma (4.62%), and a high school diploma (1.54%).

Measurement of Variables

Emotional Intelligence, as measured by a questionnaire developed by Wong and Law (2017), is comprised of sixteen question items that assessed four dimensions, namely self-emotion appraisal, other's emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion (e.g., "I really understand what I feel"). Protean career was measured by utilizing a questionnaire adapted from Lochab and Nath (2020), including the self-directed aspect (8 questions), and values-driven aspect (6 questions) (e.g., "I am responsible for my success or failure in my career"). Career resilience was measured using a questionnaire developed by Carson and Bedeian (1994), which contained four question items (e.g., "The discomforts associated with my line of work/career field sometimes seem too great"). Career satisfaction was assessed by employing a questionnaire adopted from Greenhaus et al. (1990), which consisted of five question items (e.g., "I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals").

Proposed Model and Data Analysis

Partial least square-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) is used to analyze data. PLS-SEM is a regression-based method for creating and building models for the social sciences with a prediction-oriented approach (Hair et al., 2013). PLS-SEM includes measurement model analysis and structural model evaluation.

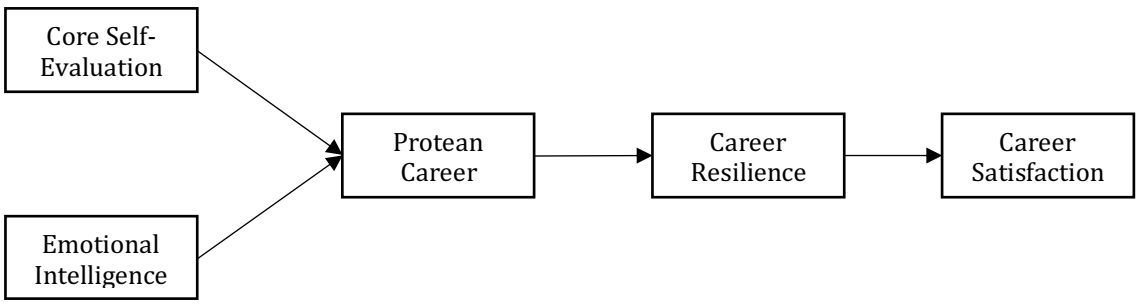

Figure 1. Proposed Model

Figure 1 provides the information about the proposed model and hypotheses development. In detail, the hypotheses are formulated as follows.

H1: Core self-evaluation affects protean career
H2: Emotional intelligence affects protean career
H3: Protean career affects career resilience
H4: Career resilience affects career satisfaction

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Model Analysis

The data was analyzed using PLS-SEM and Smart-PLS Version 3.3.2 software. There were three phases to the testing procedure: internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Using Cronbach Alpha, the results of internal consistency reliability testing were determined. The results of the data analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Internal Consistency Reliability

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	Decision
Career Resilience	0.719	Very Good
Career Satisfaction	0.864	Very Good
Core Self-Evaluation	0.683	Good
Self-emotion Appraisal	0.770	Very Good
Other Emotion Appraisal	0.866	Very Good
Use of Emotion	0.855	Very Good
Regulation of Emotion	0.795	Very Good
Self-Directed	0.798	Very Good
Value-Directed	0.737	Very Good

The reliability values in the table above are greater than 0.7. According to Hair et al. (2017), a Cronbach alpha score above 0.7 is considered to be very good. Thus, the internal consistency reliability test was satisfied by all variables. The convergent validity test was performed by considering the values of Indicator Reliability (Outer Loading) and AVE (Average Variance Extracted). Hair et al. (2017) suggested that the standard value of outer loading is very good at above 0.7, and the standard value of AVE is very good at above 0.5. Table 2 presents the results of convergent validity.

Table 2. Convergent Validity

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE
Career Resilience	CR1	0.830	0.799	0.502
	CR2	0.570		
	CR3	0.727		
	CR4	0.683		
Career Satisfaction	CS1	0.700	0.885	0.609
	CS2	0.784		
	CS3	0.812		
	CS4	0.706		
	CS5	0.883		
Self-emotion Appraisal	EIS1	0.810	0.854	0.600
	EIS2	0.741		

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE
	EIS3	0.907		
	EIS4	0.607		
Other Emotion	EIO1	0.801	0.909	0.714
Appraisal	EIO2	0.886		
	EIO3	0.810		
	EIO4	0.879		
Regulation of Emotion	ROE1	0.766	0.863	0.615
	ROE2	0.812		
	ROE3	0.635		
	ROE4	0.900		
Self-Directed	PCS2	0.742	0.857	0.505
	PCS2	0.742		
	PCS3	0.534		
	PCS3	0.534		
	PCS4	0.737		
	PCS4	0.737		
	PCS5	0.840		
	PCS5	0.840		
	PCS6	0.698		
	PCS6	0.698		
	PCS7	0.675		
	PCS7	0.675		
Value-Directed	VD1	0.603	0.837	0.565
	VD2	0.773		
	VD3	0.835		
	VD4	0.777		

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Tests

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Career Resilience	0.709								
Career Satisfaction	0.280	0.780							
Core Self Evaluation	-0.082	0.463	0.664						
Other Emotion Appraisal	0.134	0.081	0.209	0.845					
Regulation of Emotion	-0.110	0.253	0.395	0.231	0.784				
Self-Emotion Appraisal	0.084	0.345	0.384	0.358	0.455	0.774			
Self-Directed	0.184	0.320	0.588	0.380	0.404	0.313	0.710		
Use of Emotion	0.018	0.411	0.569	0.262	0.361	0.367	0.568	0.835	
Value-Directed	0.350	0.299	0.229	0.045	0.060	0.221	0.368	0.305	0.752

Results of convergent validity testing in Table 2 show that the values of outer loading from around 0.534 to 0.907. Referring to Hair et al. (2017), the factor loading values between 0.4 and 0.7 should still be considered by examining their effects on the value of AVE when deciding whether an indicator should be kept or removed. Indicators with lower loading values should remain to be used if they contribute to content validity. Thus, if an indicator has a value of more than 0.5, it should remain used, considering its contribution to content validity. On the other hand, the results of validity tests also showed that the AVE values of all constructs stood above 0.5. Thus, each variable and its indicators demonstrated good values of convergent

validity. The test of discriminant validity using criteria from Fornell-Lacker (Hair et al., 2017) showed the highest value of cross-loading. Table 3 presents the results of the discriminant validity.

Structural Model Evaluation

The subsequent step following the evaluation of the measurement model was structural model analysis to test the proposed hypotheses. This analysis was performed by examining the direct and indirect effects of variables presented in the hypotheses. The result of the PLS-SEM analysis is presented in Figure 2.

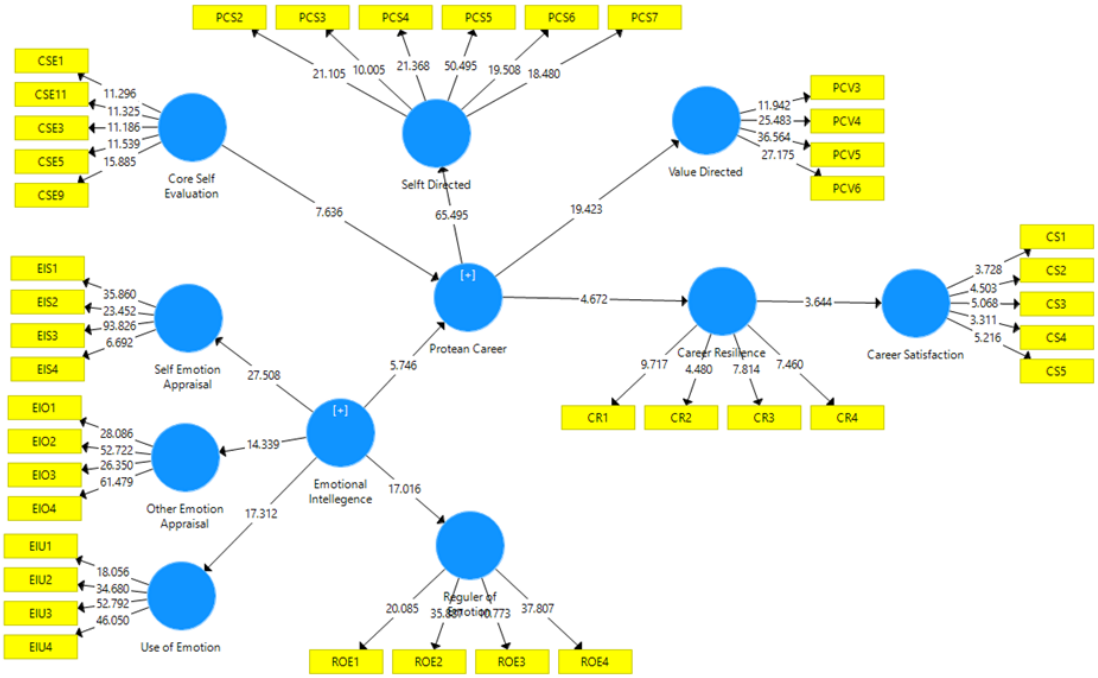

Figure 2. The Structural Model

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4 informs the results of the hypotheses testing. The results of hypothesis testing on the effect of core self-evaluation on protean career showed a t-test value of 7.636 and a p-value of 0.000. With a 95% confidence level, the applied standard of t value was 1.96. As the t-test value was higher than 1.96 and the p-value was less than 0.05, hypothesis 1 was supported. Thus, core self-evaluation affects protean career. The hypothesis testing the effect of emotional intelligence on protean career showed obtained a t-test value of 5.746 and a p-value of 0.000. With a confidence level of 95%, the standard for the t-value stood at 1.96. As the value of the t-test was greater than 1.96 and the p-value at less than 0.05, hypothesis 2 was supported. Thus, emotional intelligence affects protean careers.

The results of hypothesis testing on the effect of protean career on career resilience showed a t-test value of 4.672 and a p-value of 0.000. The standard t-value adopted was 1.96, with a confidence level of 95%. Since the value of the t-test was greater than 1.96 and the p-value stood at less than 0.05, hypothesis 3 was supported. Therefore, the protean career affects career resilience. The results of hypothesis testing on the effect of career resilience on career satisfaction

demonstrated a t-test value of 3.644 and a p-value of 0.000. With a 95% confidence level, the standard value for the t-value was 1.96. As the value of the t-test was greater than 1.96, and the p-value was less than 0.05, the fourth hypothesis was supported. Thus, career resilience affects career satisfaction.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Test	P-value	Decision
Core Self Evaluation → Protean Career	0.355	0.046	7.636	0.000	Significant
Emotional Intelligence → Protean Career	0.343	0.060	5.746	0.000	Significant
Protean Career → Career Resilience	0.342	0.073	4.672	0.000	Significant
Career Resilience → Career Satisfaction	0.280	0.077	3.644	0.000	Significant

Discussion

This research attempted to examine the effects of core self-evaluation and emotional intelligence on protean career orientation, which in turn determined career resilience and career satisfaction. Protean career is a modern career orientation that emphasizes individual responsibilities for career development, thus rendering this career orientation self-directed and values-driven (Chin et al., 2014). The findings of the study showed that core self-evaluation positively and significantly affects protean career orientation. These findings corroborate those of Herrmann et al. study (2015), where individuals with high degrees of core self-evaluation are inclined to pursue careers that they deem relevant.

The findings of this study also revealed that emotional intelligence positively and significantly affects protean careers. These findings are in line with those obtained by Aydogmus (2019), which demonstrated that individuals with high emotional intelligence will use their emotional states to regulate their behavior and adapt to changes in their environment and thus show the inclination to choose career paths without intervention from others or dependence on external factors. This suggests that individuals who possess high emotional intelligence are more inclined to have greater degrees of self-awareness, and this self-awareness is a crucial competence in protean careers.

The present research also found that the protean career orientation can enhance career resilience. The findings justify previous research findings that individuals with a high protean career orientation will be more resilient and bounce back more easily in confronting career challenges (Lyons et al., 2015). One reason to explain this finding is that these individuals are accustomed to managing their careers and assuming responsibility for their careers. In addition, this study has proven that career resilience positively and significantly affects career satisfaction. Relevant to previous findings (Lyons et al., 2015; Ng & Kee, 2018; Peeters et al., 2022), the present findings confirm that individuals with a greater degree of career resilience will be able to overcome challenges and career disruptions, and thus have a greater prospect of holding to their career goals, which eventually enables them to be more satisfied with their career advancement.

CONCLUSION

This study found core self-evaluation and emotional intelligence as predictors of protean careers. In this case, because the protean career emphasizes the important role and responsibility of the individual in career development, the individual's ability to self-evaluate and emotional intelligence are crucial factors that determine protean career success. In turn, a successful protean career will encourage career resilience so that individuals are able to face career challenges in the future. This will ultimately increase individual career satisfaction. This study has offered a theoretical contribution by expanding on previous research on protean careers. In assessing an individual's career success, previous research has generally focused more on external measures.

This present study has also specifically examined the millennial generation's perspective on their careers, an aspect that has not been discussed extensively. This study also has several implications for managers and organizations. First, it was discovered that emotional intelligence influences the career success of millennials. Therefore, managers and organizations need to recruit individuals with a high emotional quotient. When selecting employees, it is necessary to consider testing instruments that can measure each candidate's emotional intelligence. Second, core self-evaluation was discovered to contribute to the development of individual protean careers. Managers and organizations should improve employees' ability to self-evaluate to have a greater chance of achieving career success.

There are inherent limitations to this research. First, this study employs a cross-sectional design, which prevents an in-depth examination of the phenomenon due to the one-time collection of data. Future research should utilize a longitudinal design so that observing each research variable and its effect can be conducted in greater detail. Second, these research data were collected from the millennial generation in various industrial sectors in Indonesia, where the characteristics of each region may vary. In order to increase the generalizability of the results, it is recommended that future studies consider multiple regions.

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