

JOB AUTONOMY, JOB FEEDBACK AND PROTEAN CAREER AMONG EMPLOYEES IN MALAYSIAN ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC INDUSTRY: THE MEDIATING ROLES OF CAREER STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how job-related factors influence the use of career strategies in the development of protean career among employees. Using Partial Least Square (PLS) tool, it measured the mediating effect of career strategies between job-related factors (job autonomy and job feedback) and protean career. Data was collected from 306 full time employees from different functional areas and departments of selected multinational companies in Malaysian Electrical and Electronic Industry. Findings show that there exists significant positive relationship between job-related factors and career strategies. Significantly, career strategies mediate the positive relationship between job autonomy and job feedback and protean career. Such insights are useful for human resource development practitioners to develop relevant human resource development interventions to assist individuals and organisations in protean career development. Limitations and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

Keywords: Protean career; Job autonomy; Job feedback; Task significance; Career strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

The ever changing nature of business environment and organizational restructuring have affected employee's career development. Fueled by competitive global business environment, massive organizational restructuring and downsizing are taking place to further enhance organizational efficiency and flexibility. Often, employee's career development is influenced by the changes of work nature in the contemporary business world (Gubler, Arnold, & Coombs 2013). The protean career is fast becoming a new career trend in that individuals are in a perpetual mode of proactiveness and self-directedness in managing their own careers (Park & Rothwell, 2009). These were given great attention by researchers and HRD practitioners to comprehend the new career paradigms of protean career (Park and Rothwell, 2009). Reitman, and Schneer (2008) explained that many individuals are now creating work for themselves via the Internet as an inexpensive tool. Some employees have been laid off or shifted around within their firms in response to changes in organizational strategies.

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In recent years, many Electrical and Electronics (E&E) organizations in Malaysia faced decreasing revenue, inclination of pricing pressures and inventory piled up. The drop in the export of E&E components due to weaker demands from China as well as European Union in 2012 (Opalyn, 2012) posed further challenges to the E&E industry. A recent retrenchment statistical data estimation from Malaysia Employer Federation (MEF) that about 50,000 employees (either from managerial or operation) mainly from manufacturing (E&E) industry will be affected, followed by service and construction sector (Rajvinder, 2018). Some E&E Multinational Companies (MNCs) were not working at its full capacity due to the uncertain global economic outlook, while many were holding back on investments, adopting the wait-and-see method besides implementing restructuring strategies. Under such situation, the organizational massive restructuring, closure and downsizing programs which took place have significant impacts on job design and affected work flow of business operation within MNCs (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin and Cardy, 2016). Changes in job design and job characteristics have always had direct effect on individual's job satisfaction and career development. Hernaus and Vokic (2014) indicated that employees who experience a good match between their career orientation and job characteristics reported higher job satisfaction. Subsequently, they are more committed, confident and take charge in career management as compared to employees who experienced a mismatch between job characteristics and career orientation.

Similarly, many individuals are making dramatic career changes in response to individual reflection and re-evaluation (Ibarra, 2003). They have become more self-directed in their careers, to the extent of choosing lateral, or even downward job moves to fulfil their personal needs (Hall & Las, 2010). Increasingly, individuals are driven more by their own desires than by organizational career management practices. Individuals are adapting to a more transactional employer-employee relationship and taking more responsibility for their own career development and employability instead of depending on traditional organization career development programs. In this context, they are viewed as "career creator" to strategize their career pro-actively in the organization to achieve personal career goals (Hall, 2004; Rousseau & Fried, 2001; Cappellen and Janssens, 2008; Gulyani and Bhatnagar, 2017).

This increasing trend of drastic workforce reduction programs indicates that job security and career growth path in organizations is diminishing. Many organizations are forced to implement cost down strategies by reducing programs in employee training and development, career development and well-being improvement (Harvey & Brown, 2006). In view of these changes, employees have begun to be aware of the importance of "self-concept". They accept individual responsibility in determining their own career path, articulating and satisfying these needs to the fulfill the performance requirements of the firm. They are required to be "able adopt many different perspectives, to deal with contradiction, to accumulate diverse experience and to tolerate uncertainty and to process information heuristically" as suggested by Arnold (1997, p.16). Career development is a process of developing and implementing self-concepts, with satisfaction to self and benefits to society (Briscoe & Hall, 2006).

Notably, previous theoretical and empirical studies have been conducted to explore the potential factors influencing the protean career. However, empirical studies investigating the direct relationship between job-related factors and career strategies in predicting protean careers (Hall & Las, 2010; Ali, Shaharudin & Anuar, 2012) are lacking in many ways. Similarly, empirical research on the role of career strategies as mediator between job-related factors and protean career is limited

and sparse (Nabi, 2003; Wong & Roziah, 2015). Hence, the objective of the study is to examine the mediating role of career strategies over the relationship between the job-related factors and protean careers specifically in E&E industry. The current study aims to extend existing knowledge of career management and career strategies, particularly in contributing to the literature by focusing on job characteristics perspectives on protean career development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Protean Career*

Protean career is defined as a career where the individual is experiencing greater responsibility for their career choices and career opportunities. It encompasses the core values of freedom, growth and continuous learning in organizations (Hall, 2002). Briscoe and Hall (2006) emphasized that being value driven is one of the dimensions which affect a protean career. It is aligned with the individual career management concept (Hall, 1976), as an on-going process of preparing, implementing and monitoring career plans undertaken by an individual. Roziah, Maimunah, Jegak and Sidek's (2009) further asserts the perception of subjective career success is critical in achieving career advancement among public sector managers. Subjective career success refers to the individual's evaluation of his or her career success on the basis of inner feelings and values of the person. It depends on self-relevant career goals, aspiration, psychological well-being, quality work life and career stage which is meaningful to the person (Nabi, 2003), such as career satisfaction and job satisfaction (Judge, Cable, Boudreay & Bretz, 1995). Employees are encouraged to learn new skills and knowledge to improve job stimulation via job crafting process. In turn, this could be useful in seeking career growth and development (Hall & Las, 2010; Zhang, Hiraxhi, Herrman, Wei & Zhang, 2015).

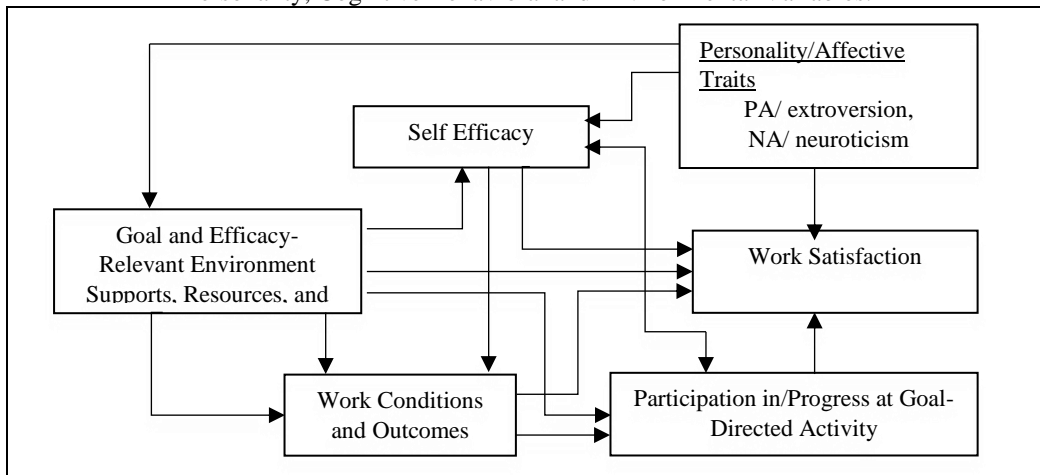
2.2. *Underpinning Theories*

Reviews of growing literature on career success and career development have suggested that external environmental elements affect individual career management (Lent & Brown, 2006). These elements are likely to affect learning experiences and eventually influence career management and decisions. Lent and Brown (2006) explained the extended social cognitive career theory (SCCT) model by including work conditions and outcomes (for example, job characteristics) elements to the existing model. They depicted that work conditions are more likely to affect individual's participation in/progress at goal-directed activity (i.e., protean career to achieve career goal), and to promote job satisfaction as shown in Figure 1. In the article, the terms job and work satisfaction are used interchangeably, that is, the involvement of one's role or experiences while performing a job or work activities.

Hall and Las (2010) viewed jobs as building blocks of career. Both the terms career and job are related to an individual's work. They depicted that the domain of job design including various behavioral and psychological effects of work, which may also take account of "behaviors and experienced associated with work" (Hall, 1976, p.4). The difference between job and career is the time frame. Job is referred to as immediate experience, while career is the accumulation of work experiences over the entire life span (Hall & Las, 2010). They further suggested that a career is a sequence of jobs or positions engaged by an employee during a period. It is the continuity of

specialization in a profession despite changes in jobs. Career is always influenced by job choices that people involves over time (Hall & Las, 2010). Individuals always have a deeper personal investment in their job to achieve career development. They evaluate their achievement through advancement within the job characteristics of the job performed. The job characteristics that allow employees to experience critical psychological states are related to beneficial work outcomes, including job performance and career development. The strength of the linkage among job characteristics, psychological states and work outcomes is determined by the intensity of the individual employee's need for growth (that is, how important the employee considered the career growth and development on the job) (Hall & Las, 2010). Therefore, under this conception of career, the discrete jobs condition/characteristics (one at a time) will influence their career choice action and career development. However, previous job design related literature has limited assessment on the job characteristics as critical variable that should be incorporate into theories of career development (Parker et al., 2001; Morgeson & Champion, 2003; Fried et al., 2007; Berg, Dutton & Wrzesniewski, 2013). Thus, the current study investigated the application of this job characteristics on protean career in specific. The discussion of job-related factors (i.e., job autonomy and job feedback) is in the following section.

Figure 1: A Process Model of Work Satisfaction That Highlights Interrelations among Personality, Cognitive Behavioral and Environmental Variables.



Source: Lent and Brown (2006, p.241)

2.3 Job Autonomy

Grant and Ashford (2008) proposed that job characterized by autonomy is more likely to stimulate proactivity among employees. Autonomy not only directly increases employee's controllability of a task, it also facilitates experience mastery by giving employees the opportunity to acquire new skills and master new responsibility. Parker, Wall, and Cordery (2001) asserted that as organizational structure flattens, employees are given increased job autonomy and latitude to expand their own roles to perform task. This experience might then lead to broader ownership of problems and a more proactive view of performance (Parker et al., 2001, Pankhurst, 2010). In a

very recent study, Russo (2017) asserted that job autonomy enables individual employee to determine ways to perform their assigned tasks and search for appropriate strategies to deal with routine and non-routine work situations (i.e., job complexity). Such job characteristics is contributing to employee's skills development which is positively related to career development. Employee uses their knowledge and skills to choose the most promising options among the identified strategies. Previous empirical findings reported that job autonomy enables employees to develop higher self-efficacy in capabilities to perform the task effectively. Subsequently, employees are more likely to engage challenging goals and strive to achieve them in a proactive manner as well as career development (Parker, 2000; Morgeson & Champion, 2003; McAllister, Kamdar, Morrison & Turban, 2007; Grant & Parker, 2009; Nielsen, 2013).

In 2005, Morgeson, Delaney-Klinger and Hemingway stressed that job autonomy is important to improve employees' capability of handling larger responsibility. They are more likely to be motivated and able to take advantage of job autonomy to cope with and learn from their job demands, eventually to take charge over their own career development. A decade later, an empirical study conducted by Wong and Roziah (2015) also found positive association between job autonomy and protean career among professionals in Malaysian Electrical and Electronics (E&E) industry ($\beta=.293$, $p<.01$). Russo (2017)'s empirical study also supported the positive relationship between job autonomy used in job complexity and career development ($\beta=.378$, $p<.05$).

2.4. Job Feedback

Based on Hackman and Oldham's job characteristic model (JCM) (1976), job feedback examines the extent of work activities which provide the job incumbent direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance. As such, employees would be able to improve their performance based on the feedback or inputs gathered from the job performed. Employees would find their job interesting if they receive sufficient feedback for continuous improvement (Johanim, Khulida, Daratul & Abdullah, 2011). Their understanding towards employer's expectation will help them develop positive attitude and produce favorable behavior outcomes which is reflected through a high level of job performance and satisfaction. In addition, job feedback is highly correlated with all psychological and behavior outcomes (for example, proactive career behavior) (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Van den Berg & Feij, 2003). Therefore, job feedback dimension is considered as an important influence on individuals' intrinsic motivation and confidence, bringing about higher level of job satisfaction and pro-activeness of career development (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; George & Zhou, 2001; Demerouti, 2006; Nielsen, 2013).

Azash, Safari, Thirupalu and Subhan (2012) revealed that job feedback is significantly associated with intrinsic motivation (for example, similar to value driven dimension of protean career behavior) at ($r=.138$; $p<.05$). They stressed that the job feedback dimension is statistically significant in predicting the level of intrinsic motivation, enabling employees to demonstrate self-directed behavior in career management. Similarly, Wong and Roziah (2015) revealed that the job feedback variable significantly predicts protean career among professional employees in the E&E industry ($\beta=.272$, $p<.05$). Timely job feedback and information from their immediate superiors and co-workers are essential to facilitate learning by ruling out poor solutions and increase job performance (Grant and Parker, 2009). Employees with high level of job feedback and support received will have larger impact on job engagement over time. They experienced increased

efficacy in optimized job requirements and enhanced task-goal focus. In turn, they become more confident achieving their career goals (i.e., self-directedness dimension in protean career).

2.5. Career Strategies

Generally, an individual pursues a particular career strategy based on the expectation that it will provide them with the greatest opportunity of attaining personal and professional success (Greenhaus et al., 2010), such as attaining competence in current job, putting in extended work hours, developing new skills, developing new opportunities at current work, attaining a mentor, building one's image and reputation, and engaging in organizational politics. Substantial studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between career strategies and career development over the last few decades (Gould and Penley, 1984; Noe, 1996; Lee, 2002; King, 2004; Greenhaus et al., 2010; Braziler, Gati and Tatar, 2015).

Career strategies are viewed as career management interventions that have implications for career development by empowering an individual to take ownership of their career and explore relevant action plan in career development (Nabi, 2003, Park, 2008). Individuals would develop an action plan of which the level of career success is achieved. Indeed, the protean career development process that occurs not only depends on the situational factors (i.e., job-related factors), but also as a function of mediating variables, such as career strategies (Nabi, 2003). The interaction process would develop expectation, motivation and skills to help each other. Ultimately, individuals learn and gain knowledge to enhance job performance and future career growth (Nabi, 2003). Judith, Maria, Jos, Svetlana, Paul, Arnold (2016) further explained that job crafting and career related competencies strategies affecting proactive career development (i.e., protean career). The proactive employees who manage their career development can enhance their well-being both through proactive job redesign and the development of career-related skills and abilities (i.e., career strategies).

2.6. Job-related Factor and Career Strategies

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) noted that job crafting is seen as a means of exercising self-directedness in one job's or career. The job crafting process enables individuals to build their identity and engage with others in ways that change their work meaning. The job incumbents always employ different types of job crafting strategies to craft more stimulating and challenging jobs. They voluntarily learn new skills and knowledges in altering their jobs and roles in order to create fit with personal and contextual expectations (Black and Ashford, 1995). As such, job autonomy creates more meaningful work through additional responsibilities and control in a way that optimizes the job performance (Grawitch and Barber, 2009; Russo, 2017).

Moreover, the increased complexity in one's job may lead to higher job autonomy by increasing the discretion in decision making. There is an association between job autonomy and career strategies when they see current jobs as instrumental to career advancement (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). For instance, individuals may seize the opportunity to convince managers that they are capable of succeeding in more challenging jobs, accepting the increased responsibilities for the totality of assignment and deserving higher level of job autonomy in performing the task (i.e., career strategies) (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001; Parker, 2014).

Notably that the increased job autonomy creates opportunities for the employees to alter work roles/environment to fit their preferred career orientation toward work. Employees' role identification can influence the way employees respond to the opportunities for career development. They place more emphasis on tasks with a developmental payoff and seek to use career strategies to enable them in moving up the organizational hierarchy. By presenting the above discussion, we postulate the first hypothesis as:

H₁: Job autonomy has a direct positive effect on career strategies.

Morgeson and Humphrey (2005) explained that job feedback is the social characteristics of the job design. These social characteristics of the jobs are important in influencing employees' attitudes and experiences toward their career development. Employees rely heavily on interpersonal feedback to obtain information about the extent to which their performance meets the job expectation and career goal achievement. Job feedback communicates information about the changes in job performance over time and use of appropriate career strategies to achieve career success (Grant et al., 2010). Generally, employees were more likely to report higher use of career strategies, such as seeking guidance, creating opportunities, extended work involvement and networking to improve job performance based on constructive feedback given by managers or co-workers (Gould and Penley, 1984; Nabi, 2003; Park and Rothwell, 2009; Parker, 2014; Miner and Akinsanmi, 2016).

In addition, interpersonal feedback also explains individuals' feelings about the relevant career strategies and sacrifices which must be made to achieve career goals. The employee who develops career strategies appropriate to his or her occupation and job feedback is likely to increase his or her probability for obtaining positive evaluation from superiors and better job performance, which leads to career success (Gould and Penley, 1984; Braziler, Gati and Tatar, 2015; Russo, 2017). Hence, the second hypothesis is postulated as follows:

H₂: Job feedback has a direct positive effect on career strategies.

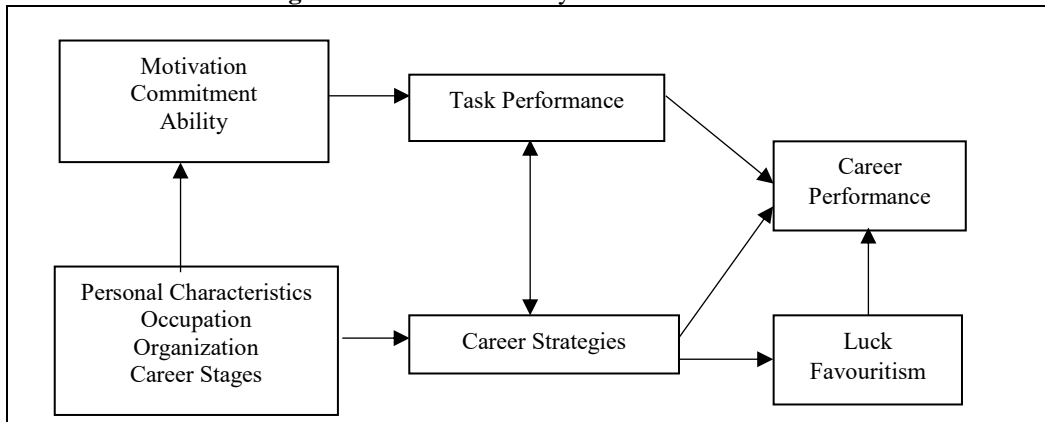
2.7. *Career Strategies and Protean Career*

Career development should invoke career strategies because individuals who are more optimistic towards their future tend to be more proactive and self-directed in engaging career strategies, providing a sense of control over their careers. They move towards meeting their career goals and aspirations along with personal values (Nabi, 2003). Gould and Penley (1984) depicted that career performance is influenced by task performance and career strategies. Task performance is primarily affected by motivation, commitment and ability, which are influenced by personal characteristics, occupation, organization and career stage (Figure 2).

Notably, the career performance domain is the outcome of career actions as explained by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994). SCCT emphasized that the perceived career performance outcome is to engage in specific actions or continuous actions which is dynamic in nature instead of static acts. Self-directedness and being value driven are key dimensions of protean career in explaining specific actions to achieve career performance (Lent et al., 1994). Hall (1976) argued that the career strategies will form a broad base for launching a career and is likely to increase career options that individual will have in future.

In a similar vein, based on self-determination theory, individual factors are associated with individual achievement outcomes through intrinsic motivation (Ryan, 2016). The existence of intrinsic work motivation (such as to take different career strategies, in current study) fosters self-directedness behaviour (i.e., one of the key dimension in protean career) for goal accomplishment, particularly in attaining career goals (Gottfried and Yan, 2013). When employees experience strong intrinsic motivation for work, they are more likely to take charge in attaining the challenging goals. Thus, self-determination theory suggests that intrinsically motivated employees are more likely to develop specific career strategies in achieving their career and organizational goals (Ryan, 2016). Similarly, Grant, Fried and Juillerat (2010) explained job characteristics such as job autonomy and job feedback are the basic elements to influence job incumbents' intrinsic motivation, commitment and ability in shaping their job perception and desired working behaviours which are related to job performance. Model in Figure 2 outlined the association among task performance, career strategies and career performance.

Figure 2: A Model of Early Career Performance



Source: Gould and Penley (1984, p.262)

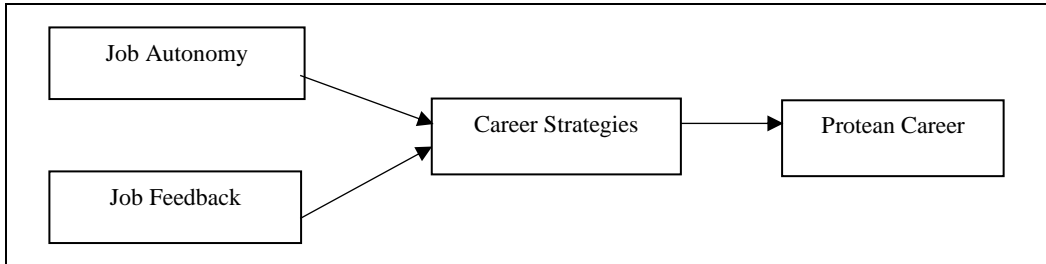
According to Nabi (2003), career success cannot be adequately explained until the mediating role of career strategies is taken into consideration. However, the empirical research in examining career strategies as a mediator variable influencing protean career is still lacking. Thus, this study aims to identify the mediating effect of career strategies over the relationship between job-related factors and protean career (Grant, Fried and Juillerat, 2010), by proposing the following three related hypotheses:

H₃: Career strategies has a direct positive effect on protean career.

H₄: Career strategies mediates the relationship between job autonomy and protean career.

H₅: Career strategies mediates the relationship between job feedback and protean career.

Based on the review of above related literature, a research framework as shown in Figure 3 is proposed.

Figure 3: Research Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. *Population and Sample*

The sampling frame comprised of multinational corporations (MNCs) in the E&E industry. The sampling units were employees from different functional areas namely production, purchasing, quality control, business development, finance and other departments. In this study, cluster random sampling method was employed to determine the number of MNCs in the selected states in Malaysia, followed by random selection method to select the samples from each identified MNCs. Multistage sampling method was adopted to select the sample respondents. The first stage involved identifying and defining the population. Out of the fourteen Free Trade Zones where the electrical and electronics manufacturing organizations were based in, two zones were selected through simple random techniques. The Free Trade Zones comprised of a free commercial zone for commercial activity which includes trading (except retail trading), breaking bulk, grading, repacking, relabelling and transit, and a free industrial zone for manufacturing activity. In the second stage, by using a cluster sampling method, a total of five multinational manufacturing companies were identified from the selected two Free Trade Zones. They were of similar categories with an average of more than fifteen operation years in E&E industry. In the third stage, stratified random sampling technique were used to identify the samples representing certain subgroup of gender and working experiences. The criteria for employees selection as the subject of this study are full time employees (i) either in managerial or technical level because they were the important human resources who integrate planning, leading, organizing and controlling functions in management and to achieve organizational goals; (ii) involved directly (primary) and indirectly (secondary) in organizational value chain activities. A total of 306 questionnaires was received and used for analysis, representing about 87% of response rate. This study involved 46.7% male and 53.3% female professional employees. Generally, most of the respondents' desire to spend time on work are reflected by their frequency in doing office work at home over the weekends or during public holidays; majority of respondents (66%) reported as occasional, and 11.1% among them stated as often. Greenhaus et al. (2010) explained that professional employees who desire to work more hours adopts one of the career strategies whereby certain amount of time and energy is devoted to one's work role in order to attain career development more than others. The next section presents the assessment of the goodness of measure of the constructs in terms of their validity and reliability.

3.2. *Instrumentation*

All instruments were adopted from previous studies and were modified to measure the study's variables. The instrument using five-point Likert scale was applied to all constructs. The eight-item protean career scale was adapted based on the work of Briscoe and Hall (2006). All items were measured using a 5 point Likert-like scale with values 1="to little or no extent" to 5="to a great extent". Job autonomy- nine-item and job feedback –five item measurements were adopted and adapted from Morgeson and Humphrey (2005). Each item was rated on five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree". Career strategies are measured using a six-item scale adapted from Gould and Penley's (1984) career strategies inventory. The items were measured on a five-point scale with 1="to little or no extent" to 5="to a great extent". As shown in Table 1, the loadings for all items were greater than the recommended value of .5 (Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarsdedt., 2014). The factor loadings <.7 were removed in order to improve the AVE score. The composite reliability indicates that the latent constructs ranged from .81 to .92 which exceeded the recommended value of .7 (Hair et al., 2014). Subsequently, the AVE (to measure the variance captured by the indicators relative to measurement error) for respective constructs were above the recommended value of .5 (Hair et al., 2014). Thus, convergent validity requirement was fulfilled in this study.

Table 1: Result of Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Loading	AVE	CR
Protean Career	PCSD1	0.738	0.516	0.893
	PCSD2	0.791		
	PCSD3	0.831		
	PCSD4	0.804		
	PCSD5	0.732		
	PCSD6	0.614		
	PCSD7	0.658		
Job Autonomy	AUTO1	0.817	0.665	0.947
	AUTO2	0.880		
	AUTO3	0.814		
	AUTO4	0.869		
	AUTO5	0.827		
	AUTO6	0.736		
	AUTO7	0.850		
	AUTO8	0.883		
	AUTO9	0.864		
Job Feedback	FB1	0.780	0.597	0.881
	FB2	0.864		
	FB3	0.885		
	FB4	0.654		
Career Strategies	CO1	0.699	0.591	0.878
	CO3	0.755		
	CO4	0.890		
	CO5	0.729		
	CO6	0.752		

Discriminant validity explains the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs. As shown in Table 2, the correlations for each construct were less than the square root of AVE for the indicators measuring that particular construct, indicating adequate discriminant validity. In total, the measurement model demonstrates adequate convergent and discriminant validity in this study.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

	Job Autonomy	Job Feedback
Job Autonomy	0.812	
Job Feedback	0.477	0.772

Note: Diagonals represent the square root of the AVE while the off-diagonals represent the correlations.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We employed partial least square (PLS) path analysis to perform data analysis (see Table 3 and Figure 4). The empirical finding suggests that 31.5% of the variance of career strategies can be explained by job autonomy and job feedback ($R^2=0.315$). A closer look shows that both job autonomy ($\beta=.216$, $p<.01$), t -value ($3.097>2.33$, significance level =1%) and job feedback ($\beta=.289$, $p<.01$), t -value ($4.310>2.33$, significance level =1%) were positively related of career strategies as in Table 3. It was found that job feedback was a better predictor to career strategies as compared with job autonomy. The more and relevant job feedbacks received by the employees, the more appropriate and frequent career strategies are practiced by the employees. Similarly, 41.8% of the variance in protean career can be explained by career strategies ($R^2=0.418$). There was a positive relationship between career strategies and protean career ($\beta=.518$, $p<.01$), t -value ($10.068>2.33$, significance level =1%).

These findings are consistent with Parker, Williams and Turner's (2006) empirical study that has found association among job autonomy, proactive behaviours and strategies variables. They explained that job autonomy influences role-breadth self-efficacy, and role breadth self-efficacy shaping proactive behaviours in improving task performance through learning new skills and knowledge, self-nomination or self-presentation and creating opportunities (Gould and Penley, 1984). Employees would communicate to superior about their desires to pursue greater responsibility and at presenting themselves in the best possible light. Similarly, relevant, timely and specific job feedback would encourage employees to seek career guidance from senior/older experienced co-worker (i.e., mentor) either inside or outside the organization for career decisions, information and support for themselves. In addition, receiving interpersonal feedback from immediate superior and co-workers might improve communication of career goals and aspirations among employees (Nabi, 2003). Hence, career strategies usage (for example, network) would elevate and help individual to achieve his or her career goals and aspirations.

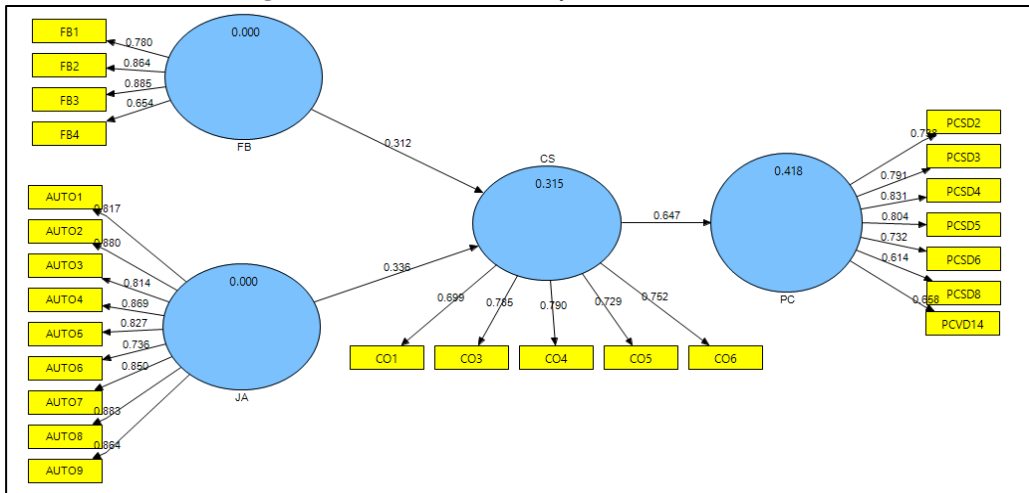
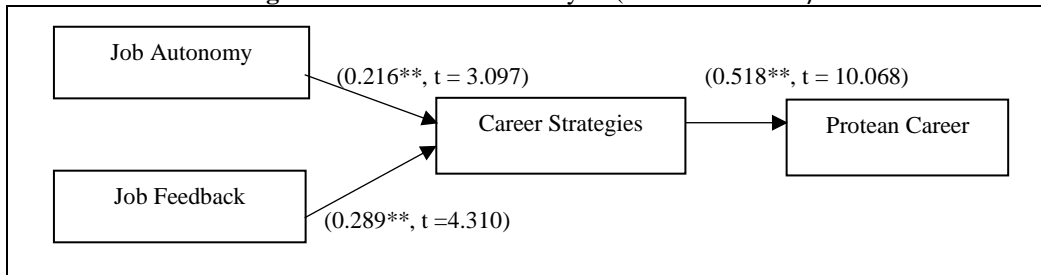
Table 3 and Figure 5 also shows the results of the mediation effect of career strategies through the bootstrapping procedure. The bootstrapping analysis shows that indirect effect of career strategies, $\beta=0.112$ was significant at t value of 2.655 with $p<0.01$. Preacher and Hayes (2008) indicated that indirect effect of 0.112, 95% Boot CI: [LL=0.032, UL=0.194] which does not straddle a zero in

between indicating that career strategies mediates the relationship between job autonomy and protean career. Meanwhile, the bootstrapping analysis also shows that indirect effect of career strategies, $\beta=0.150$ was significant at t value of 3.767 with $p<0.01$. According to Preacher and Hayes (2008), the indirect effect of 0.150, 95% Boot CI: [LL=0.072, UL=0.230] which does not straddle a zero in between indicating that career strategies also mediates the relationship between job feedback and protean career. The mediation analysis shows that career strategies as a mediator in current study is significant. The findings suggested that the employees with higher job autonomy and received more relevant feedbacks from managers/superiors tended to engage frequently in the career strategies. These in turn lead to higher level of involvement in protean career, causing employees in becoming more self-directed and value-driven in developing their career.

Table 3: Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Relationship	Coefficient	t-value	CIBC 2.5%	CIBC 97.5%	Decision
Job Autonomy – Career Strategies	0.216	3.097***			Supported
Job Feedback – Career Strategies	0.289	4.310***			Supported
Career Strategies	0.518	10.068***			Supported
Career strategies mediates the relationship between job autonomy and protean career	0.112	2.655***	0.032	0.194	Supported
Career strategies mediates the relationship between job feedback and protean career	0.150	3.767***	0.072	0.230	Supported

These results generally support the notion that if the job characteristics and career strategies context are appropriate and relevant for employees, it increases the likelihood of them engaging in protean career in which they gravitate towards personal aspirations and higher intrinsic satisfaction in their career advancement (Nabi, 2003). Apparently, employees would gain a feeling of control over their career options as they enhance their human capital and develop social capital by engaging in career strategies. The feeling of control increases their likelihood of career goal accomplishment and perceive themselves as more competent in achieving high level of career success.

Figure 4: Result of Path Analysis (Structural Model)**Figure 5: t value of Path Analysis (Structural Model)**

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Managerial Implications

This study explains managerial implications of contextual situation on protean career. The empirical findings suggest that job-related factors and career strategies can affect employees' protean career. It provides some insights for managers to develop human resource development (HRD) strategies in assisting employees' career development. Nonetheless, this does not require every job to be redesigned; an assessment of job features by the incumbent may, however, enhance the job meaningfulness and career development. Hall and Las (2010) demonstrated that individuals make career decisions by prioritizing specific jobs characteristics over others. Those job characteristics will be instrumental in psychological career success of protean career. For instance, by providing job autonomy, it could substantially increase employees' self-efficacy and be proactive in career management. In addition, organizational training and development programs are crucial in promoting continuous learning and career enhancement strategies among employees. It could be assumed that the more organizations take an active interest and help in their employees'

career development, the more benefits can be obtained by the organizations because they are able to increase employees' commitment and reduce turnover rate accordingly (Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009).

Moreover, employers should improve job autonomy level via job design to improve employees' self-efficacy in career decision making. It enables them to be more responsible in taking appropriate career strategies for success their career achievement. Additionally, findings also suggest that employees who receive regular job feedback from their superior or co-workers are strongly linked career strategies practices in protean career. Thus, employers should improve good interpersonal relationship with job design, interesting tasks and opportunities to provide consistent timely and relevant job feedbacks to the employees. Consequently, these initiatives will help in raising level of career strategies usage in managing career development. This approach is consistent with the Hall and Las's (2010) study which states the internalization of work process will cause the individuals to assume more responsibility for taking career decisions and career goals accomplishment.

Since the individual is the master agency in managing protean career via relevant career strategies, employees should improve their competencies and expertise in managing own career growth. Employees are encouraged to acquire or enhance work-related skills and abilities through education, training and job experiences. It is intended to enhance one's performance on one's current job and will be required in a subsequent position. Skill development can involve formal occupational training as well as experiential learning. Employees can also develop skills by acquiring additional responsibilities on their current job, by working with experienced colleagues, or by joining occupational associations that sponsor continuing education. Essentially, a commitment to skill development and lifelong learning strategies helps to ensure individual's employability for protean career development. In addition, HR managers should understand individual's career growth expectations and assist them to access relevant career development opportunities accordingly. These opportunities may include job rotation, job enlargement and job enrichment programs, training, coaching, consistent feedback and others.

Organization can stimulate effective mentoring programs between mentor and protégé by including career counseling and emotional support during career management process. The organizations need to develop long term mechanisms to allow mentors and protégés to develop mutually supportive bonds with one another. HRD practitioners should acknowledge the existence of protean career as new career trends among professional employees. In addition, HRD practitioners should facilitate and support employees to take individual responsibility in managing their careers. Significantly, these findings may be appreciated by HRD practitioners in applying human resource developmental programs wherever applicable, specifically in training, organizational development and career development.

The findings of this study revealed that job autonomy and job feedback (job-related factors) demonstrated significant relationships with career strategies. Similarly, career strategies was positively associated with protean career. Hence, Lent and Brown's (2006) extended SCCT model was further complemented by a mediator in explaining the participation in/ progress at goal-directed activity (i.e., protean career to achieve career goals). In addition, the findings further affirmed that career strategies has an mediating effect onto the relationship between job related factors and protean career, an important insight which has never been discussed in the past.

As a conclusion, the conceptual understanding of the relationships among job-related factors (i.e., job autonomy and job feedback), career strategies, and protean career obtained in the quantitative study matches the ground theories of career development model, SCCT. This study contributes to the growing empirical evidence that job-related factors promotes protean career among employees through relevant career strategies.

5.2. Study Limitations and Future Research

The goals of the study have been achieved by witnessing significant paths linking job autonomy, job feedback and protean career through career strategies. Findings of the study extend existing knowledge of career management and career strategies, particularly in contributing to the literature by focusing on job characteristics perspectives on protean career development. However, since the sample respondents were confined to employees based on selection criteria from the MNCs in Malaysia E&E industry, findings may not be generalizable to other employees who did not fall into the category. Further studies can consider including different levels of employees within the same MNCs or examining the same proposed paths on different departmental employees. Similar studies can also be done in different industries (for example, tourism, education and public sector) to improve generalizability. In addition, future studies may consider examining treating demographic factors as moderating variables. It is essential to include demographics variables such as employees' educational level and work experiences because they may offer different interaction effects which can help practitioners and researchers in understanding the direct and indirect predicting effects of the protean career.

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