

Protean Career Orientation and Perceived Employability: The Mediating Role of Career Self-Management

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Abstract

The study examines the relationship between protean career orientation and perceived employability along with the engagement in proactive career behavior. The main objective of this paper is to understand how protean career orientation would form perceptions of student's employability with career self-management as a mediator. Data was collected with the help of a questionnaire from 182 business school students at Panjab University, Chandigarh. The result of correlation analysis indicates that a positive relationship exists between protean career orientation and perceived employability. PROCESS macro given by Hayes has been used to test the mediation. Analysis by bootstrapping method reveals that career self-management fully mediates the relationship between the two variables. Theoretically, this study extends the presence of protean career orientation beyond the work domain into the student life. It also adds on to the cross-cultural research by examining protean career orientation that is a US rooted concept in the Indian scenario. The practical implication of this study is that it improves perception of students towards their employability by indulging in career self-management initiatives. Further, business school management should aim at interventions to increase the self-directed and values-driven nature of students to make them more proactive with regards to their career management.

Keywords: Protean Career Orientation, Career Self-Management, Perceived Employability, Business School Students

INTRODUCTION

A dynamic and turbulent environment characterizes the current economy with insecurity and uncertainty (Hall, 1996, 2002). Psychological contracts have transformed to a short-term from a long-term arrangement wherein fixed career paths no longer exist and individuals do not see a lifelong career with the same organization (Rousseau, 1995). In response to the new environment, protean career has emerged in the 21st century (Hall, 1996). This new career era necessitates individuals to engage in career management competencies to generate career opportunities that enable them to achieve their career goals and guarantee employability (Hall and Moss, 1998). Protean mindset allows employees to work with numerous organizations in transactional relationships that make them valuable and employable to current and future employers (Fugate, 2006; Rothwell and Arnold, 2007; Vanhercke et al., 2014).

Protean career is the career in which a person is in charge of career development and not the organization (Hall, 1996, 2004). The career path is changed accordingly from time to time to meet the needs of the individual. It

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includes a calling towards one's career. It is a hallmark of identity changes and continuous short learning cycles. Protean career orientation implies a mindset, an attitude that reflects self-direction, freedom and value-driven decision making (Briscoe and Hall, 2006). Translation of this orientation into concrete action is done with self-management behaviors (Vos and Soens, 2008).

Career self-management implies proactivity of an individual in managing their careers (Orpen, 1994; Kossek et al., 1998; King, 2004). Two components of career self-management have been recognized, i.e. reflective and behavioral. Reflective component relates to the insights that individuals develop in their career ambitions. Behavioral component indicate the behaviors initiated by employees to manage their careers (Gould and Penley, 1984; Noe, 1996; Sturges et al., 2002). Career self-management in these studies is known by a variety of terms i.e. career strategies, proactive career behavior and career competencies (Sturges et al., 2000, 2002; Kuijpers et al., 2006).

Career self-management initiatives enable individuals to be more aware of their skills, capabilities and form the basis for perceived employability (Jackson and Wilton, 2017). Employability is a critical factor for employees in the job market (Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth 2004) and a high level of attention is paid on increasing the employability of students in universities (Yorke, 2004). Employability has been described as the capacity of individuals to retain the jobs they have, or to get the one they desire (Rothwell and Arnold, 2007). The focus of this study is on perceived employability that is an individual's perception of his or her opportunities to obtain or retain jobs (Vanhercke et al., 2014).

Empirical research on protean career orientation is still in its nascent stage. This study answers the call for it and examines whether the protean career concept that is rooted in American culture can be observed in India as well. Majority of the studies on protean career orientation are focused on individuals who are currently employed. The study extends the study of protean career orientation beyond the working population. Understanding the career orientation of the business school students helps in their transition from university to work and future career prospects. Moreover, this paper investigates the proactive career management behaviors initiated by students and their perception of employability.

In order to address the research gaps, the main objective of this paper is to understand how protean career orientation would form perceptions of student's employability with career self-management as a mediator. The objectives of this study are twofold. First, to explore protean career orientation, career self-management and perceived employability among business school students at the university level. Second, to analyze the relationship between protean career orientation and perceived employability with career self-management as a mediator. The present study contributes to the literature in several ways. It undertakes a new approach to protean career orientation by examining it at the student level. Further, it also studies the proactive career behavior that students engage in to enhance their career and prospects of employability. The research question the study intends to address is: Are students with protean orientation more proactive in management of their careers?

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Protean Career Orientation

Hall (1976) first introduced the concept of protean career. Protean has been compared to the Greek God Proteus who could transform his shape at will. It has been further referred to as “the path with a heart” (Shepard, 1984). The perception of an employee towards protean career has been defined as protean career orientation (Briscoe and Hall, 2006). It does not indicate any particular behavior but it is the career-oriented attitude that represents value-

based decision-making, autonomy, and self-direction. Hirschi, Jaensch and Herrmann (2017, p.208) described protean career orientation “as an outlook in which the person, not the organization, is in charge of career development.”

Briscoe and Hall (2006) identified two dimensions of protean career orientation: values-driven and self-directed career management. Values-driven component reflects the degree to which personal values of an individual impact alternative career decisions. Self-directed component refers to the degree one is independent and takes charge of his or her career. The dual-dimensional aspect of protean career orientation that consists of values-driven and self-directed component have been used in various studies (Porter, Woo and Tak, 2016; Drenzo, Greenhaus and Weer, 2015; Rahim and Rohaida, 2015; Volmer and Spurr, 2011; Briscoe and Finkelstein, 2009 and Briscoe, Hall and Muth, 2006). Baruch (2014) introduced the unidimensional aspect of protean career orientation on the assumption that being self-directed with regard to one's values can be viewed as one dimension. For the purpose of this study, the two dimensions of protean career orientation: values-driven and self-directed have been studied.

Career Self-Management

Career self-management has been defined as the extent to which an individual regularly gathers information, takes initiative in solving career problems and making decisions (Kossek et al.; 1998). It is the proactivity that employees depict in managing their careers (Orpen, 1994; Kossek et al., 1998; King, 2004). It is a type of vocational behavior that employees portray throughout their professional lifetime and not just at the beginning of their careers (King, 2004).

Various dimensions of career self-management have been identified over the years such as creating career opportunities, extending work involvement, opinion conformity, self-nomination, networking, seeking career guidance and other enhancement (Gould and Penley, 1984); individual career planning and individual career tactics (Orpen, 1994); developmental feedback seeking and job mobility preparedness (Kossek et al., 1998) and positioning behavior, influence behavior and boundary management (King, 2004). For the purposes of the study, three dimensions given by Hirschi et al., (2018) namely networking, career exploration and learning have been adopted.

Perceived Employability

Fugate et al., (2004, p. 23) defined employability as “one's ability to identify and realise career opportunities”. Rothwell et al., (2008, p. 2) defined self-perceived employability as “the perceived ability to obtain sustainable employment appropriate to one's qualification level.” In today's volatile career climate employability increases the likelihood of individuals obtaining employment and generating career opportunities, and it involves the perception of employees to adapt efficiently to various changes that promote transition among jobs, within and between organizations (Hall and Mirvis, 1995; Fugate et al., 2004; McArdle et al., 2007; Lin, 2015).

Previous studies identified internal and external employability as its dimensions (Rajan, 1997; Kirschenbaum and Mano-Negrin, 1999; Rothwell and Arnold, 2007). The student's perception of employability in this study included- university's reputation (brand strength), belief in self, reputation of one's field of study and state of the external market (Rothwell, Herbert and Rothwell, 2008).

Protean Career Orientation, Career Self-Management and Perceived Employability

Protean career orientation has been studied in association with several variables such as organizational commitment, organizational identification, self-efficacy (Baruch, 2014), work-life balance (Direenzo, Greenhaus and Weer, 2015), and work values like altruism, independence and autonomy (Abessolo, Hirschi and Rossier, 2017). It is predicted that individuals who are self-directed would be proactive in managing their careers. Limited studies have examined the relationship between protean career orientation and career self-management. It was found that protean career orientation had a positive relationship with and impact on career self-management (Vos and Soens, 2008; Rahim and Siti-Rohaida, 2015; Direenzo, Greenhaus and Weer, 2015; Herrmann, Hirschi and Baruch, 2015). Thus, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

Hypothesis 1: There exists a significant relationship between protean career orientation and career self-management among business school students.

Career self-management competencies lead to a better understanding of one's self and enables an individual to make informed choices with respect to employment opportunities (Jackson and Wilton, 2017). A positive association has been seen between dimensions of career self-management and perceived employability (Purcell et al., 2013; Qenani, MacDougall and Sexton, 2014; Okay-Somerville and Scholarios, 2015; Jackson and Wilton, 2017). Career management skills are considered to increase the probability of obtaining desired jobs. Hence, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

Hypothesis 2: There exists a significant relationship between career self-management and perceived employability among business school students.

A few studies have examined the relationship between protean career orientation and perceived employability. A positive relationship has been seen between protean career orientation and perceived employability where both the dimensions of protean career orientation had an impact on perceived employability (Voes and Soens, 2008; Lin, 2015; Donald, Baruch and Ashleigh, 2017). Being self-directed and values-driven translates into higher perception of getting a job. Thus, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

Hypothesis 3: There exists a significant relationship between protean career orientation and perceived employability among business school students.

Conflicting results have been seen in the limited studies that examined the relationship between protean career orientation and perceived employability with career self-management as a mediator. Protean career attitude was found to be positively associated with career self-management that had no significant relation with perceived employability (Vos and Soens, 2008). Another study found that learning goal competency fully mediated the relationship between protean career orientation and perceived internal employability, and partially mediated with perceived external employability (Lin, 2015). However, there is a scarcity of studies on the relationship among protean career orientation, career self-management and perceived employability at the student level. Based on the previous studies and the gaps therein, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

Hypothesis 4: Career self-management mediates the relationship between protean career orientation and perceived employability among business school students.

Demographics and Protean Career Orientation

Protean careers have been found to be more accommodating of the women's career path as it leads to a better work-life balance (Reitman and Schneer, 2003). In the same study, it was found that younger employees preferred protean careers. With respect to gender, protean career orientation was found to be more prevalent among the women (McDonald, Brown and Bradley, 2005). In support of this, another study stated that women were more values-driven whereas in terms of self-directed component, no gender differences were seen. Moreover with increasing age, employees were found to be less self-directed and more values-driven (Segers, 2008). In contrast to the above studies, no significant difference was found in protean career orientation with respect to gender and age (Hirschi, Jaensch, and Herrmann, 2017). Based on the above studies, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

Hypothesis 5a: There exists a significant difference in protean career orientation with regard to age among business school students.

Hypothesis 5b: There exists a significant difference in protean career orientation with regard to gender among business school students.

Hypothesis 5c: There exists a significant difference in protean career orientation with regard to marital status among business school students.

Hypothesis 5d: There exists a significant difference in protean career orientation with regard to stream among business school students.

Hypothesis 5e: There exists a significant difference in protean career orientation with regard to specialization among business school students.

Hypothesis 5f: There exists a significant difference in protean career orientation with regard to work experience among business school students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

The universe for this research consisted of all the business school students at Punjab University. Students from the various streams: MBA (General, International Business, Human Resources, Entrepreneurship, and Executive), M.Com (Hons.) and Ph.D. were the target population. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 182 completed questionnaires were returned. So, the response rate was 72.8 % and 182 students formed a part of this study's usable sample. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. The sample consists of 55.5 percent of males, with majority of them less than 25 years of age (70.3 percent) and unmarried (92.3 percent).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

		Number	Percentage	
Age	Less than 25 years	128	70.3	
	25-30 years	49	26.9	
	30 years and above	5	2.7	
Gender	Male	101	55.5	
	Female	81	44.5	
Marital Status	Married	14	7.7	
	Unmarried	168	92.3	
Stream	MBA (General)	47	25.8	
	MBA (IB)	44	24.2	
	MBA (HR)	14	7.7	
	MBA (Entrepreneurship)	8	4.4	
	MBA (Executive)	16	8.8	
	M.Com (Hons.)	27	14.8	
	Ph.D.	26	14.3	
	Specialization	Finance	28	15.4
		Marketing	30	16.5
Human Resource Management		21	11.5	
International Business		44	24.2	
Entrepreneurship and Strategic Management		12	6.6	
None		47	25.8	
Work Experience	With	67	36.8	
	Without	115	63.2	

Measures

The data was collected through self-administered questionnaires using the following measures:

Protean Career Orientation

Protean career orientation was adapted using the fourteen items scale given by Briscoe et al., (2006) on a 5-point

Likert scale ranging from 1 (to little or no extent) to 5 (to a great extent). The scale comprised of two dimensions: self-directed and values-driven. Wordings of the items were adjusted to reflect student's perspective. Sample items included "I am in charge of my own career" and "What is most important to me is how I feel about my career success, not how other people feel about it."

Career Self-Management

Career self-management was assessed using the nine items scale developed by Hirschi et al., (2018). The respondents rated the items on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (not true at all) to 5 (completely true). The scale consisted of three dimensions- networking, career exploration and learning. Sample items included "I frequently build contacts with other people who are important for my career development" and "I make sure that my work-related abilities and knowledge are up-to-date."

Perceived Employability

Perceived employability was measured using the sixteen items scale constructed by Rothwell, Herbert, and Rothwell (2008) on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items included "I am generally confident of success in job interviews and selection events" and "Employers specifically target this university in order to recruit individuals from my subject area(s)."

Reliability of the Instruments and Proposed Model of the Study

The reliability of the scales used in the study was examined with Cronbach's alpha so as to measure its internal consistency. The reliability estimates denoted by alpha ranged from .75 to .89 as given in Table 2. Reliability estimates of .70 and above indicate strong reliability of the scales. Hence, the scales used in the study were consistent and reliable. The proposed model of the study is given in Figure 1.

Table 2. Reliability Coefficients

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	No. Of Items
Protean Career Orientation	.755	4.055	14
Career Self-Management	.868	3.806	9
Perceived Employability	.891	3.703	16

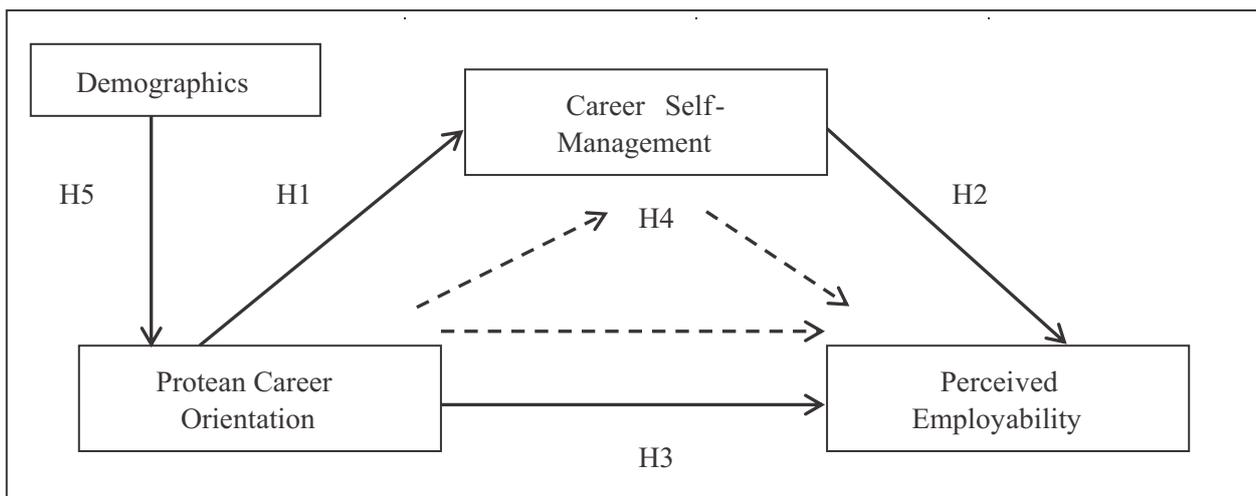


Figure 1. Proposed Model of the Study

Data Analyses

Correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship among protean career orientation, career self-management and perceived employability. The mediation effect of career self-management was tested using Hayes' PROCESS macro (2017). Further, ANOVA and independent samples t-test were used to test the significant difference in protean career orientation with regard to demographics.

Interpretation of the Findings

Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation was used to examine the relationship between protean career orientation and career self-management, the results of which are given in Table 3. The results reveal that a significant positive relationship exists between protean career orientation and career self-management among business school students, $r(180) = .42, p < .01$. Thus, **H1 is accepted.**

To study the relationship between career self-management and perceived employability, Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation was applied. The results in Table 3 indicate that a significant positive relationship exists between career self-management and perceived employability among business school students, $r(180) = .581, p < .01$. Thus, **H2 is accepted.**

To examine the relationship between protean career orientation and perceived employability, Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation was used. The results as given in Table 3 show that a significant positive relationship exists between protean career orientation and perceived employability among business school students, $r(180) = .351, p < .01$. Thus, **H3 is accepted.**

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations for all the Variables

Variable	M	SD	1.	2.	3.
1. Protean Career Orientation	4.0546	.55840			
2. Career Self-Management	3.8065	.42090	.420**		
3. Perceived Employability	3.7030	.59503	.351**	.581**	

Note: n=182. **. Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2017) was used to explore the mediation effect of career self-management on the relationship between protean career orientation and perceived employability. In PROCESS Macro version 3.5, model 4 was used to test the hypothesis and the results are given in Table 4. The results revealed that there was a significant positive effect of protean career orientation on career self-management (B = .593, SE = .096, p = .000). On regressing perceived employability on protean career orientation and career self-management, it was seen that there was a significant positive effect of career self-management on perceived employability (B = .494, SE = .062, p = .000). The total effect of protean career orientation on perceived employability was also found to be significant (B = .466, SE = .093, p = .000). The direct effect of protean career orientation on perceived employability was found to be insignificant (B = .1725, SE = .088, p > .05). As the value of protean career orientation becomes insignificant after controlling for career self-management, results support for full mediation. Lastly, indirect effect was tested using bootstrapping method. At 95% confidence interval, 5000 bias-corrected bootstrap samples were utilized. The results shown in Table 5 depicts that a significant indirect effect of protean career orientation on perceived employability exists through career self-management as zero does not fall within the confidence interval (indirect effect = .2930, SE = .068, 95 % CI = .1716, .4360). The indirect effect was confirmed with the Sobel test (z = 4.886, SE = .060, p = .000). Therefore, **H4 is accepted** where career self-management fully mediates the relationship between protean career orientation and perceived employability among business school students.

Table 4: Mediation Analysis

Variables	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	R ²
PCO → CSM	.5931	.0957	6.2002	.0000**	.4043	.7818	.1760
CSM → PE	.4940	.0622	7.9391	.0000**	.3712	.6168	.3515
PCO → PE	.4655	.0926	5.0273	.0000**	.2828	.6482	.1231
(Total Effect)							
PCO → PE	.1725	.0880	1.9613	.0514	-.0011	.3461	
(Direct Effect)							

Note: n =182. PCO, Protean Career Orientation; CSM, Career Self-Management; PE, Perceived Employability;

B, Unstandardized regression coefficient; LLCI, Lower Level Confidence Interval; ULCI, Upper Level Confidence Interval. **. Significant at .01 level.

Table 5: Indirect Effect of Protean Career Orientation on Perceived Employability

Variable	Effect	SE (boot)	Bootstrap 95% Confidence Interval	
			LL	UL
Career Self -Management	.2930	.0681	.1716	.4360

Note: n=182, Bootstrap sample size = 5000, LL = Lower Level, UL = Upper Level

The difference in protean career orientation with regard to demographics was analyzed with the use of independent samples t-test and ANOVA. To test if significant difference exists in protean career orientation with regard to age among business school students, ANOVA was employed. The results as given in Table 6 depict that no significant difference exists in protean career orientation with regard to age among business school students, $F(2,179) = .429, p > .05$. Thus, **H5a is rejected**.

To test if significant difference exists in protean career orientation with regard to gender among business school students, independent samples t-test was applied. The results as given in Table 6 reveal that no significant difference exists in protean career orientation with regard to gender among business school students, $t(180) = -1.016, p > .05$. Thus, **H5b is rejected**.

To test if significant difference exists in protean career orientation with regard to marital status among business school students, independent samples t-test was applied. The results as given in Table 6 reveal that no significant difference exists in protean career orientation with regard to marital status among business school students, $t(180) = -.882, p > .05$. Thus, **H5c is rejected**.

To test if significant difference exists in protean career orientation with regard to stream among business school students, ANOVA was employed. The results as given in Table 6 depict that significant difference exists in protean career orientation with regard to stream among business school students, $F(6,175) = 2.519, p < .05$. Business school students from the Ph.D. stream have the highest level of protean career orientation and differ significantly from the MBA (Executive) stream. Thus, **H5d is accepted**.

To test if significant difference exists in protean career orientation with regard to specialization among business school students, ANOVA was employed. The results as given in Table 6 depict that no significant difference exists in protean career orientation with regard to specialization among business school students, $F(5,176) = 1.663, p > .05$. Thus, **H5e is rejected**.

To test if significant difference exists in protean career orientation with regard to work experience among business school students, independent samples t-test was applied. The results as given in Table 6 reveal that significant difference exists in protean career orientation with regard to work experience among business school students, $t(180) = 2.102, p < .05$. Business school students with work experience had a higher level of protean career orientation. Thus, **H5f is accepted**.

Table 6: Difference in Protean Career Orientation with regard to Demographics

		N	Mean	S.D.	Test Statistic	Sig.
Age	Less than 25 years	128	4.0569	.41080	.429	.652
	25-30 years	49	4.0321	.44441		
	30 years and above	5	4.2143	.50000		
Gender	Male	101	4.0262	.43008	-1.016	.311
	Female	81	4.0899	.40905		
Marital Status	Married	14	3.9592	.50795	-.882	.379
	Unmarried	168	4.0625	.41364		
Stream	MBA (General)	47	4.0897	.36890	2.519	.023*
	MBA (IB)	44	4.0097	.43696		
	MBA (HR)	14	3.9949	.37532		
	MBA (Entrepreneurship)	8	3.9821	.55163		
	MBA (Executive)	16	3.8795	.45529		
	M.Com (Hons .)	27	3.9788	.38251		
	Ph.D.	26	4.3077	.40847		
Specialization	Finance	28	4.0638	.37209	1.663	.146
	Marketing	30	4.2214	.30150		
	Human Resource Management	21	4.1224	.45856		
	International Business	44	4.0097	.43696		
	Entrepreneurship and Strategic Management	12	4.0298	.56116		
	None	47	3.9605	.42645		
	Work Experience	With	67	4.1397		
Without	115	4.0050	.38971			

* Significant at .05 level

DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

The aims of the study were to investigate the presence of protean career orientation, career self-management and perceived employability among the university business school students. The results reveal that protean career orientation was associated with career self-management, which in turn related to perceived employability. The positive relation between protean career orientation and career self-management is in line with the previous studies and supports that individuals with protean career orientation strive for concrete actions to manage their career (Hall, 2004; Vos and Soens, 2008; Drenzo, Greenhaus and Weer, 2015). It indicates that individuals with protean career orientation identify and direct their own career path.

Career self-management was positively related to perceived employability as indicated in the previous studies (Vos and Soens, 2008; Lin, 2015; Donald Baruch and Ashleigh, 2017). The degree to which business school students are proactive in management of their career automatically translates into stronger perceptions of employability. Further, career self-management mediated the relationship between protean career orientation and perceived employability. Business school students who were self-directed and value driven in their approach towards career engaged in career management activities that increased their employability prospects in the future.

The difference in protean career orientation with respect to demographics was also studied. No significant difference was seen in protean career orientation with respect to gender and age, contrary to the previous findings (Reitman and Schner, 2003; McDonald, Brown and Bradley, 2005; Segers, 2008). It was found that students of the Ph.D. stream and those who had prior work experience were more protean career oriented. No previous study has examined protean career orientation among Ph.D. students but its presence can be attributed to the fact that doctoral study requires self-direction which made the students more proactive and led to the development of protean career orientation. Some of the students pursuing Ph.D. also had work experience. This supports the finding of a qualitative study wherein it was seen that work experience leads to experiential learning. It further enables individuals to recognize career trajectory against their own values and thus, shape protean career orientation (Sargent and Domberger, 2007). In another study it was seen that job experience leads to a greater degree of self-direction (Sergers, 2008).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Theoretical Implications

This study has made a number of significant contributions to the career literature. Firstly, the results extend the presence of protean career orientation beyond the work domain into the student life. It recognized the presence of protean career orientation among business school students who were discovered to be self-directed and values-driven. This study also adds on to the cross-cultural research by examining protean career orientation that is a US rooted concept in the Indian scenario.

Secondly, this study improves understanding of the perception of employability among students. Discovering the student's perspective of employability is essential as their opinions are not well recognized in the previous studies and developing an understanding of the student's view have a strategic impact on their future employability prospects, performance in an organization and their career success.

Lastly, very few studies had analyzed the empirical linkages among protean career orientation, career self-

management and perceived employability. This study filled that research void and advanced the theory on it. It found protean career orientation to be predictive of career self-management and perceived employability where career self-management acted as a mediator.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have practical implications for both the students and the management of the business school. For students, it recognizes the importance of adopting a self-directed and value-driven approach to manage their careers. Students with a strong protean career orientation had a proactive stance towards their career. Therefore, the business school management should contribute to the development of protean career orientation. Educational institutes can enable students in this by encouraging them to be more proactive and understanding of their values. This can be done through a combination of career counseling, role modeling and experience of work in an organizational environment through internships.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Previous researchers examined the relationship of protean career orientation with other variables, but its association with career self-management and perceived employability among students had remained unexplored. So, this study attempted to fill that gap. Protean career orientation accounted for 17.6 % variability in career self-management and 12.3% variability in perceived employability. Both protean career orientation and career self-management explained 35.2 % variation in perceived employability. It made a significant contribution by identifying that the university students who are self-directed and values-driven are proactive in managing their career and perceive them to be employable in the future. Protean career orientation enhances engagement in career-management initiative and boosts self-perception of employability. The university should formulate strategies to encourage students to explore career options, engage in networking and continuously learn work-related skills.

The study is constrained by a few limitations. Firstly, self-reported measures of the variables have been used for this research. To eliminate common method bias, future studies should consider collecting data from various sources. Secondly, data was collected at a single point in time. Further, the study assesses the students' perception of employability. To ascertain whether these perceptions translate into reality, longitudinal study would be useful. This will help in studying the causality among the variables. Lastly, the study was limited to business school students only. Future researchers should test this model with students from different subject areas and universities.

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