

Do They Pursue the Same? A Cross-culture Research on Career Anchor of IT/IS Personnel

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Abstract

While career anchor has been mainly studied in US society; this study extends research to Chinese cultural context to investigate the implications of career anchor in terms of job/career satisfaction and subsequent turnover intention among information technology/information systems (IT/IS) personnel in Taiwan and United Arab Emirates (UAE) societies. Chinese guanxi culture could be plays key roles in shaping career anchor and in affecting employees' assessing their job/career and turnover decision. A survey study will be used for conducted to validate the hypotheses and compare the different with Taiwan and UAE two societies.

Keywords

Chinese *Guanxi* Culture, Career Anchor, Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intention

Introduction

The concept of career anchor, originally proposed by Schein (1978) as guidance for career decisions in general and IT/IS personnel in particular, refers to the combination of an individual's needs, attitudes, values, and talents in the process of career development (Delong, 1982). It is shaped by long-term testing and accumulated experience with respect to self-development, learning, family, and work (Chang, 2010).

While most existing empirical research is conducted in western countries, there is dearth of research in the other cultural contexts. Recently Chang (2010) explored career anchor and subsequent turnover intention among IT/IS personnel in Taiwan society. Based on interviews, she extended the existing typology of career anchors to include learning motivation which was explicit for Taiwanese IT/IS personnel and reported different priorities in career anchors of Taiwanese IT/IS personnel from those in the USA. Culture may influence how differently career anchors are valued and their implications in working environment (Kim, 2005). Practically, with increasing diversity in workforce of IT/IS industry, it is imperative to understand the peculiarity in IT/IS personnel' career anchor from different cultural contexts. However, the cultural impact on career anchor has received little empirical support. Researchers spend much effort in identifying the factors causing IT/IS personnel's turnover, in order to enhance retention and accordingly reduce the costs incurred from the turnover. Most such studies boil down to understanding the IS employees' needs and desires, which influence selection of occupation and intention to leave an organization (Quesenberry & Trauth, 2007). In light of this, the first research question to be resolved in this paper is: What is the relationship between the job/career satisfaction and turnover intention of IT/IS personnel in Chinese/UAE cultural societies?

Another limitation in prior research is that most studies follow Hofstede's (1983) culture conceptualization and focuses on national cultural impact on career anchor (Chang, 2010). Although this approach is widely applied in prior research in comparing different national cultures, the Hofstede's

national cultural dimensions may not be sufficient to capture the uniqueness in non-western cultures, such as Chinese culture (Hwang, 2015). Due to the modernization of non-Western countries is essentially different from that of Western countries Hwang (2012b). In Chinese society, *guanxi* is one of the major dynamics where business/individual exchange revolves. Derived from the Chinese social philosophy of Confucianism, *guanxi* emphasizes the importance of one's association with others in a hierarchical manner, and builds upon implicit mutual obligations, reciprocity, and trust (Luo, Huang, and Wang, 2011). It is necessary that research on cultural impact on career anchors goes beyond Hofstede's (1983) cultural dimensions to investigate the specificity of certain culture that may have more imminent impact on career anchors. Derr and Laurent (1987) suggest more investigation into IT/IS personnel's career anchors from the perspectives of different cultures. However, to date, these perspectives have remained ignored. Therefore, the second research question to be resolved in this paper is: What is the relationship between the Chinese *guanxi* culture and career anchors of IT/IS personnel in Chinese/UAE cultural societies?

Different from most prior studies conducted in the western society (Wynne et al., 2002; Hsu et al., 2003; Sumner and Yager, 2004), this study attempts to extend prior research findings by exploring the effects of career anchors on job/career satisfaction in different contexts. Two cultural societies varying from Western society, Chinese and UAE, were selected for this study. Thus, the third question to be resolved in this paper is: What are the differences between the Chinese and Muslim societies of above two research questions? Our findings provide insight into the importance for organizations to retain IT/IS personnel in the Taiwan and UAE societies.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

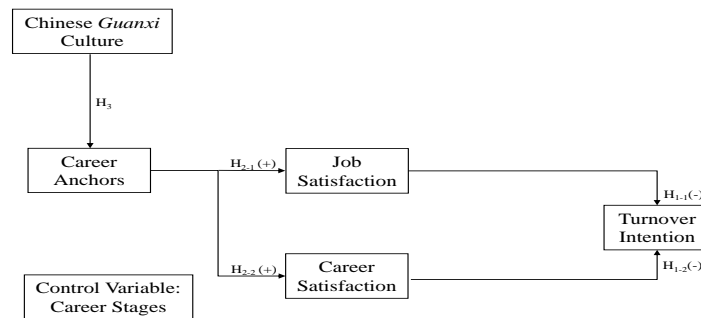


Figure 1: Research Model

Impact of Career Anchor

The majority of extant research related to career anchors is based on the conceptualization originally proposed by Schein (1978), adjusted by DeLong (1982) and measured by Igarria and Baroudi (1993). It is suggested that IT/IS personnel possess a variety of career anchors, and that, as a consequence, there should be more than nine career anchors in the career anchor model (Crepeau et al., 1992; Sumner and Yager, 2004). Later, Chang (2010) highlighted the importance of “learning motivation” (Chang, 2010) as a career anchor, referring to the extent to which companies provide learning opportunities for IT/IS personnel, and this reflects the growth demand for IT/IS personnel especially. Thus, on the basis of the above review of literature (Schein, 1978; DeLong, 1982; Crepeau et al., 1992; Igarria & Baroudi, 1993; Chang, 2010), we adopt a comprehensive typology of career anchors including the following thirteen career anchors: technical competence, managerial competence, autonomy, organizational stability, challenge, lifestyle, identity, creativity, variety, service, entrepreneurship, geographic security and learning motivation.

Career planning activities present an approach that management uses to coach employees through self-assessment and goal setting to increase employees' job satisfaction (Punnett et al. 2007). Career anchors, reflecting the needs and wants of employees from a career, are critical for goal setting. Given the diversity of career anchors, the emphasis on specific anchors may not be equal or universal (Chang et al., 2011).

Similar to the prior research (Chang et al., in press), we compare the impact of career anchor between IT/IS personnel from Taiwan and UAE in terms of career satisfaction and intention to leave. Job satisfaction is generally defined as an affective response by an employee concerning individual's particular job and results from the employee's comparison of actual outcomes with those that are expected, needed, wanted, or perceived to be fair or just (Chang et al., 2012). Different from job satisfaction, career satisfaction refers to the extent to which an IT/IS personnel expresses a positive orientation toward his or her career (Igarria & Baroudi, 1993; Chang et al., 2012). Career planning usually goes beyond a specific job and organization and evolves in different career stage through career life (Super, 1957; Dalton et al., 1977). Thus, if the current organization cannot satisfy their career need or cannot satisfy their next stage career; even now organization can satisfy their current career anchor, they also have the intention to turnover (Chang, 2010; Chang et al., 2012). The negative relationship between career satisfaction and intention to leave an organization also receives empirical support (Igarria & Baroudi, 1993).

Therefore, we posit the relationship between career anchor and job/career satisfaction, and subsequent intention to leave. Given the variety of career anchors, we also expect such relationships may vary for both of IT/IS personnel in Taiwan and UAE societies.

H_{1-1/2}: Job/Career satisfaction of IT/IS personnel have negative effect on their turnover intention.

H_{2-1/2-1~H_{2-1/2-13}}: Career anchor of IT/IS personnel have positive effect on their job/career satisfaction.

Chinese Guanxi Culture and Career Anchor

Due to guanxi capturing the relational orientation in Chinese society distinguishes Chinese culture from Western culture (Suen et al., 2007). Ho (1995) pointed out that Chinese culture has a relational orientation, a concept that describes ordinary behavior in Chinese culture, where the self is not an independent entity. For this reason, the transfer of the individualism characteristic of Western culture to the Chinese relational culture will cause conflict. In Chinese culture, individuals' social behavior depends on their social relationship (Jacobs, 1979). The Chinese tend to apply different rules of social exchange when dealing with people of different relations. Due to the deep impact of *guanxi* on Chinese culture, an individual's social relation is a very important source of power (Hwang, 2012a). One's power is determined by the extent of control exercised by an individual over resources and his/her particular relationship network. The more powerful network an individual has, the greater the advantages he/she will enjoy (Hwang, 1987, 2012a, 2015).

Hwang (1987) developed the conceptual framework of Face and Favor Theory, based on the social exchange theory, for fathoming the dynamic relationships among the theory concepts. He divided interpersonal relationships into two parts: (1) The expressive component: in order to satisfy affective feelings, one will manipulate others to procure some desired material resource from family, close friends and other congenial groups. They can also generate an individual's feelings of affection, warmth, safety, and attachment. (2) The instrumental component: human beings have strong desires to enlist help from outside resources; thus, they will try very hard to manipulate others to attain their personal goals. These two components are always mixed.

Adopting this framework, Face and Favor Theory (Hwang, 1987) identifies three states of *guanxi* indicating the different degrees of permeability between the psychological boundaries used by a Chinese. On one extreme, expressive component is paramount and such *guanxi*, also called expressive ties, usually features the close relationship within families; in contrast, when instrumental component is overwhelmingly emphasized, people develop instrumental ties and such *guanxi* usually captures the relationship with strangers. In most scenarios, *guanxi* is a mixture of both expressive and instrumental components, which is particularly relevant to social relationships in working environment. Individuals may engage in adjusting expressive and/or instrumental component in *guanxi*. For instance, increasing expressive component in *guanxi* (la *guanxi*) will move a person to the inner circle of social networks. Despite globalization and import of western culture, many Chinese have lived in encapsulated communities that are hierarchically organized, with major economic and other resources controlled by a few power figures who could arbitrarily allocate resources (Hwang, 1987, 2012a, 2015). Hence, *guanxi* remains paramount in guiding and understanding social relationships in Chinese society.

In studies by Igarria et al. (1995), and Marshall and Bonner (2003), it has been asserted that the culture has a significant effect on the career anchor of IT/IS personnel as the people needs and wants are shaped

by certain culture through socialization and internalization (Kim, 2005). Particularly in a recent study, Chang (2010) found that importance of various career anchors may vary for national cultures. IT/IS personnel in Taiwanese society consider lifestyle, organizational stability and learning motivation as more important career anchors, which is quite different from prior research conducted in the US society. Thus, the study sets out to understand the way in which Chinese *guanxi* culture impacts on IT/IS personnel in Chinese cultural society. Therefore, we posit the relationship between Chinese *guanxi* culture and each career anchor both of IT/IS personnel in Taiwan and UAE societies:

H₃₋₁~H₃₋₁₃: Chinese *guanxi* culture has effect on the career anchors of IT/IS personnel.

Career anchors are not static but evolve along career stages. The DTP model (Dalton, Thompson, and Price, 1977) consists of four distinct career stages and it has been used to examine the career development of professionals (Carlson & Rotondo, 2001). In the apprentice stage, an individual works under the supervision of others, and the representative activities include learning, assisting others, and following directions. In the colleague stage, one demonstrates his/her capability to perform solid professional duties and to make independent contributions. In the mentor stage, one begins to get involved in work that can lead to the development of junior employees through training and interfacing. Finally, those individuals in the sponsor stage provide directions for the organization and have significant corporate power as they approach upper management level. It has been suggested that career stage is a useful tool to understand a professional worker's career perception over the tenure of his/her career (Carlson & Rotondo, 2001).

Methodology

We will conduct a survey study to validate the hypotheses and use Partial Least Squares' (PLS) regression analyses for data analysis. PLS recognizes two components of model building, i.e., the measurement model and the structural model, and employs a component-based approach for estimation purposes. Since it places minimal restrictions on measurement scales, sample size, and residual distributions (Chin et al., 2003), it is thus chosen to accommodate the large number of constructs (Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006). In this research, we examined the measurement model for construct validity and reliability. This is followed by examining the structural model for hypothesis testing. Together, the measurement and structural models form a network of measures and constructs (Fornell, 1982).

Conclusion and Future Research

Our research entails both theoretical and practical implications for career anchor research: to extend research on career anchor to other cultural context and reveals important career anchors influencing job/career satisfaction and subsequent turnover intention, reveals the important distinction between job and career satisfaction in channelling the impact of career anchor on turnover intention, provides empirical evidence regarding the role of Chinese *guanxi* culture in influencing career anchor and the relationship between job/career satisfaction and turnover intention in Taiwan and UAE societies, leads to some interesting findings that lead to further investigation.

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