

Employees' careerist orientation: Who is more careerist in the Nepalese context?

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Abstract

This article measured the status of employees' careerist orientation, which is characterized as a preference for seeking job progression via methods that are not performance-based. Significantly, this study was carried out to measure those who are more careerist oriented according to their demographic groups. Perception-based primary data were collected from the employees working in the Nepalese Banking Industry. Five hundred and forty-six respondents were surveyed and analyzed quantitatively with the help of SPSS. Data analysis revealed that employees working in the banking industry believe that career advancement is not possible through performance alone. Moreover, this study exposed several findings (a) employees with a bachelor's degree or below were more career-minded than those with a master's degree or above, (b) female employees were more careerist oriented than their male counterparts, and (c) permanent employees' careerist orientation was greater than temporary employees. Based on the results of this study, numbers the implications and directions for further research were highlighted.

Keywords: Careerism, careerist orientation, career-minded, Nepalese context, demographic aspects

Introduction

The research on careers generally agrees that for many people, the nature of their career development and their experiences with organizational career management techniques may differ significantly from those of prior generations. Employees who are careerist-oriented are individuals who prioritize their professional objectives over those of their team and employer (Feldman & Weitz, 1991). Careerists can no longer assume a direct correlation between their work and the stability of their employment, the rate at which their careers advance, and the level of authority they attain within their companies (Feldman & Weitz, 1991; Feldman, 1985). As a result, small business sectors are unable to afford quality staff for their success, and since there are so many unskilled workers, their psychological contract was found to be negatively correlated with their professional commitment (Karki et al., 2021; Bhattarai et al., 2020). According to careerists, performance and competence alone may not guarantee their career goals and desires in the new transactional psychological contracts linked to more competitive internal and external labor markets. Their employer may not always reward mere devotion and dedication; thus, they must be responsible for their job security. Careerists are therefore believed to be more inclined (than non-careerists) to behave instrumentally at work, seeking desired career advancement chances through non-performance-based strategies such as politicking, deceit, impression management, and presenteeism (Feldman, 1985).

Crucially for employers, careerists initiate these career management efforts at the expense of their allocated employment obligations and roles (Chay & Aryee, 1999). Previous empirical research confirms this, revealing strong negative relationships between careerist attitudes to work and crucial human, work, and organization-focused outcomes, such as organizational commitment, turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and job involvement (Orpen, 1998; Feldman & Weitz, 1991). Numerous authors (e.g., Briscoe et al., 2006; Eby et al., 2003; Sullivan, 1999) have urged a more significant study considering gender, age, education level, and other

demographic aspects that may influence an individual's adaptable career attitude. Therefore, the managers must know who is more (or less) careerist oriented among the employees. If managers know the careerist (or non-careerist) employees, they can make proper plans and interventions to tackle the situation. But, to the best of review during this study, there is lack of studies that address the demographic aspect of employees and their status of carrier-orientation. Hence, this study was carried out to measure the status of carrier orientation of employees working in the Nepalese Banking Industry in terms of the different groups (e.g., male, female, permanent, temporary, etc.) of demographic aspects of the employees.

Review of Literature

Working people today are very eager to enhance their careers in all fields. There is significant evidence from established theories and practices that performance and non-performance measures help employees improve their careers. The concept of careerist orientation refers to the employee's focus on career advancement through non-performance measures. According to Feldman and Weitz (1991), careerist orientation is the predisposition to seek career progression through non-performance-based ways. Careerists frequently place more emphasis on image-building than actual labor because they believe that merit alone is insufficient for obtaining upward mobility in companies (Bolino, 1999). Given organizational reduction, restructuring, and the subsequent separation of employees, it is understandable that individuals could adopt a new perspective on their career growth, dubbed a "careerist orientation."

Feldman and Weitz (1991) say that careerism is linked to several ideas about how to get ahead in a career. First, moving up in an organization based on merit alone is hard. Second, social connections with bosses, coworkers, and friends are often needed to get ahead. Third, making it look like you're successful is essential because that can be just as important as being successful. Fourth, it's critical to realize that, in the long run, the person's career goals will not align with the organization's goals. Fifth, sticking with an employer isn't likely to pay off. Sixth, sometimes you have to act dishonestly to get the promotions you think you deserve. Seventh, in order to get ahead, it's sometimes necessary to do things that help you get ahead instead of things that help the company.

Those focused on their careers sometimes engage in manipulative tactics (such as political or dishonest conduct) in the workplace to advance their own positions, regardless of the impact on the company as a whole. As a result of their need for companionship and access to resources, they establish informal social ties with those in positions of authority (Hsiung et al., 2012). The proliferation of careerist mindsets may have more uniformly detrimental effects on the efficiency of organizations. Thus, in the post-bureaucratic work environment of today, employers must strike a delicate balance. Nevertheless, for businesses to thrive in the future, they will need to have a staff that is dedicated, adaptable, and productive (Moss & Simon, 1991). On the other hand, careerist attitudes may be emerging more prominently in their workforce due to the implications for more self-managed or protean careers. So, employers must address this fundamental contradiction and conundrum in the working relationship to gain a competitive edge (Aryee & Chen, 2004). In their landmark research, Feldman and Weitz (1991) propose that careerist work attitudes emerge when a person loses faith in their company. It seems that by preserving or reestablishing trust via the creation of fair organizational career management policies, employers may overcome the challenging issues of managing the employment relationship and minimize the establishment of a careerist-oriented workforce.

Methodology

Measures

Careerist Orientation

Careerist orientation has been assessed using an eight-item, condensed version of a scale created by Feldman and Weitz (1991). This scale measured the degree to which people agree that professional development

depends more on image management and interpersonal ties than skill (Feldman et al., 2002). Sample items "the key to success is who you know, not what you know". The research by Hsiung et al. (2012) assessed the alpha reliability at .87. On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5, respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed with the statements (strongly agree). The reliability of the construct careerist orientation was .89 in this study.

Demographic Variables

In this research, control factors such as the workers' sex, age, and education level were considered. These demographic factors might be connected to different aspects of careerist orientation. For statistical analysis, demographic variables have been coded as gender (0 for male, 1 for female), tenure (0 for permanent, 1 for temporary), designation (1 for up to Bachelor's degree, 2 for master's degree, and 3 for MPhil and Ph.D. degree)

Population, Sample, and Sampling Design

The people in the study are white-collar workers in Nepali commercial banks. The sample comprises people of different gender, ages, departments, education, level, etc. Out of the 30 commercial banks in Nepal, nine were chosen to be the respondents through a method called "convenience sampling," which is not random. These banks were chosen because they were easy for the researcher to access. As a part of the study, 546 people were surveyed from the sample of banks. Table 1 shows information about the employees who were polled.

Table 1
The Sample's Frequency Statistics

	Group	N	Percentage
Sex	Male	333	61.00
	Female	216	39.00
Tenure	Permanent	205	37.50
	Temporary	341	62.50
Education	Up to Bachelor's degree	101	18.50
	Master's degree	432	79.10
	MPhil or Ph.D. degree	13	2.40
N = 546			

Table 1 depicts the frequency distribution and the percentage of the sample according to a different group of demographic variables (male, female, temporary, permanent, etc.). Frequency distribution statistic shows that the study sample has well represented the population regarding sex, tenure, and education.

Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire comprises items to measure careerist orientation and demographic details. All answers have been collected using a 5-point Likert scale to gauge agreement or disagreement with the statement in question, except for the demographic information. A questionnaire has been made in English with a Nepali translation to make things easier for those who fill it out. In particular, a researcher conducted the translation, which was then reviewed by another researcher and a banker whose mother tongue is Nepali. Five individuals, equivalent to the study's respondents, also reviewed the questionnaire's wording, simplicity, and clarity. Human resource managers were asked to involve their staff in surveying every sample bank. An individual in each bank's human resources department was designated as a reference for the researcher to distribute and collect surveys. A total of 700 questionnaires were handed out to respondents, one at a time, with the aid of a reference person. There were 700 surveys sent out, and 577 were filled out and returned. However, only 546 (78%) of the surveys were filled out and usable.

Data Analysis

Data analyses have been carried out using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Frequency distributions have been calculated to describe the size of the demographic variables of the respondents. Mean,

standard deviation, ANOVA, and t-test have been estimated to measure the levels and differences of careerist orientation among different demographic variables (sex, tenure, and education).

Results

Table 2 shows that on a scale of 1 to 5, personnel working in Nepali commercial banks had an overall mean careerist inclination of 2.79, with a standard deviation of 1.32. a Likert scale. Table 2 shows that, among the various employee groups based on academic credentials, the mean careerist attitude of these groups ranged from 2.02 to 2.97, with a standard deviation of .96 to 1.40. Those with master's degrees showed the greatest level of careerist orientation (i.e., 2.97), followed by those with MPhil and Ph.D. degrees (i.e., 2.64) and those with just Bachelor's degrees (i.e., 2.02). The relationship between levels of employee's educational degree and careerist orientation level was inverted U shaped.

Table 2
Indicators of the Careerist Orientation's Mean and Standard Deviation According to Educational Groups

Group	Number	Careerist Orientation	
		Mean	Standard Deviation
Up to Bachelor	101	2.02	.96
Master's Degree	432	2.97	1.33
MPhil or PhD	13	2.64	1.40
Total	546	2.79	1.32

According to Table 3 careerist orientation was reflected by mean values of 2.46 and 3.31 for men and women, respectively, with standard deviations of 1.29 and 1.20. In comparison to women, male employees had a lower careerist inclination. Similar results were found for the mean careerist orientation of permanent and temporary employees, which was 2.41 and 3.41, respectively, with standard deviations of 1.38 and .93. The careerist inclination of permanent workers was higher than that of temporary employees.

Table 3
The Mean Difference of Study Variables by Sex and Tenure

Sex	N	Careerist Orientation			
		Mean	Standard Deviation	t- value	
Sex	Male	333	2.46	1.29	-7.87**
	Female	213	3.31	1.20	
Tenure	Permanent	205	3.41	.93	10.08**
	Temporary	341	2.41	1.38	

**, **, the mean difference is significant at the .01 and .05 significance levels.*

There were mean variations in careerist orientation levels across groups for each demographic category investigated, as indicated in Tables 2 and 3. Yet, this distinction could or might not be statistically significant. Because of this, the ANOVA test has been performed to determine the statistical significance of the mean difference in careerist orientation for the demographic variable that belongs to three or more groups (such as education). Similar to the t-test, the mean difference in careerist orientation has been estimated to determine the statistical significance for demographic variables with just two groups (i.e., gender and tenure).

As shown in Table 4 of the ANOVA results, the p-value of the F-test for the demographic variable 'education level' in relation to careerist orientation was less than .01 ($p < .01$, $F = 22.97$). This demonstrates that there was a statistically significant variation in the mean careerist inclination of the employees across the different educational levels. The last stage was identifying the groups with the mean differences in careerist inclination. In order to determine which groups among the various levels of educational groups of workers had the mean differences related to careerist orientation, post-hoc analysis was conducted.

Table 4
Educational Groups' ANOVA Results for the Research Variables

Variables	F - Value	Significance
Careerist orientation	22.97**	.00

**, **, The.05 and.01 levels of significance for the mean difference, respectively.*

Table 5
Comparisons of the Mean Difference by Educational Group

Dependent Variable	Education Group (I)	Education Group (J)	Mean Diff. (I-J)	Significance
Careerist Orientation	less than Bachelor	Masters	.95**	.00

**, **, The.05 and.01 levels of significance for the mean difference, respectively.*

According to Table 5, the average difference in careerist orientation between employees with a bachelor's degree and those with a master's degree was.95, and the level of significance was 0.00 ($p < .01$). This shows that the average differences between Bachelor's degree holders and master's degree holders were statistically significant. In terms of careerist orientation, none of the other groups of employees' levels of education were statistically significant. As shown in Table 3, the t-values for gender and length of service were -7.87 ($p < .01$) and 10.08 ($p < .01$) when it came to careerist orientation. There were statistically significant mean differences in careerist orientation between male and female employees and between permanent and temporary workers, as shown by the t-value and degree of significance above.

Discussion

In terms of careerist orientation, this study indicated that the average level of employees' careerist orientation was just more than 50% which means employees working in the commercial banking sector believe that career advancement is not possible through performance alone. It is necessary for non-performance activities like relationships with decision-makers, networking, image building, and organizational loyalty. This aspect extends to customer satisfaction as well, as a significant number of customers encounter recurring difficulties, primarily resulting from interactions with employees and managers (Bhandari et al., 2021).

According to this research, workers with a bachelor's degree or below are more career-minded than those with a master's degree or above. It could be possible because less educated employees will have less excess to truthful information about how the decisions are made regarding promotion, demotion, job assignment, transfer, etc. Consequently, they may feel that their performance is insufficient to advance their career and requires non-performance activities like relationships with the decision maker, networking with an influential person, image building, etc. This study tested that female employees were more careerist than their male counterparts. This finding contradicts the prior conclusion of Babalola and Okurame (2004), who found that, compared to female managers, men managers had much more careerist views regarding their jobs. According to researchers, the difficulty of professional progression for women compared to males In general, employees today think that getting forward at work now depends more on whom you know than on your knowledge. The ordinary worker today believes that advancing in a job depends more on whom you know than on your understanding (Babalola & Okurame, 2004). Such belief seems higher in female employees than male employees in the Nepali commercial banking sector. Possible causes could be inspiration from their experience, where they may be perceived as having benefited from non-performance activities like personal relationships, networking, image building, etc.

Likewise, in terms of tenure, this study revealed that permanent employees' careerist orientation was greater than temporary employees. Plausible causes can be the employees' immediate step for career advancement; temporary employees' immediate action is to get a permanent appointment, and they believe, being a fundamental step for career life, their performance will be a major determinant for their permanency in the job. Nevertheless, permanent employees' immediate action is to get a higher position, and they believe that their performance is insufficient to be promoted. Therefore, they try to engage in non-performance activities to advance their careers.

Conclusion and Implications

Regarding the employee's careerist orientation, females than males, permanent than temporary, and up to bachelor degree holders than master degree holders were careerists. Female employees, permanent employees, and up to bachelor degree holder employees believe career advancement is possible through non-performance activities like relationships with derision makers, networking with influential persons or authorities, image building, impression management, etc. than hard work (Feldman & Weitz, 1991). Being careerist-oriented, employees are more concerned about advancing their careers with the belief that their hard work does not contribute to their career advancement, employees careerist orientation negatively impacts work engagement which ultimately reduces productivity. Therefore, the organization can introduce special programs to minimize the careerist orientation of these employees, like (a) an awareness program about how career advancement can be achieved, (b) an explanation of promotion and transfer policy, (d) making a clarification of the decision-making process, etc.

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