

Subjective work experiences, career orientations, and psychological career resources of working adults

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Abstract

The primary objective of the present study was to assess whether career orientations and psychological career resources relate to individuals' subjective work experiences. A quantitative survey was conducted on a random sample of 2 997 participants at predominantly managerial and supervisory level in the South African service industry. The measuring instruments consisted of a subjective work experiences scale, the Career Orientations Inventory and Psychological Career Resources Inventory. The results indicated career orientations and psychological career resources as significant predictors of the participants' subjective work experiences. The results make an important contribution to existing literature on career well-being and subjective career success.

Career guidance and counseling, and organisational career development support have become of crucial importance in the changing employment climate in order to maximise individuals' chances of experiencing job and career satisfaction and success over the life course (Sinclair 2009). More recently, interest in the subjective aspects of career success and satisfaction has gained greater salience in contemporary career research. This can be ascribed to the more turbulent career context resulting in careers being less ordered and predictable (Arnold and Cohen 2008; Arthur, Khapova and Wilderom 2005; Coetzee and Bergh 2009; Hall and Chandler 2005; Kidd 2008; Sinclair 2009). Contemporary measures of people's subjective experiences of their careers and working lives tend to focus on the career self-concept or identity, the internal career orientation and the core self-evaluations relating to people's psychological career resources or career meta-competencies (Coetzee 2008, Coetzee and Schreuder 2009b; Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth 2004; Kanye and Crous 2007; Kuijpers and Scheerens 2006; Sinclair 2009; Van Dam 2004; Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden 2006).

People's experiences of subjective career success have also been linked to people's subjective experiences of their careers and working lives which also relate

to their general career well-being (Bozionelos 2004; Kidd 2008; Sinclair 2009). While the notion of career well-being has been used by Kidd (2008, 166) to measure people's subjective career experiences as expressed by their positive and negative feelings about their careers, other researchers such as Gottfredson and Duffy (2008, 44) and Coetzee and Bergh (2009, 2) use more general measures of subjective well-being (including happiness and satisfaction) in the careers context. In the light of the foregoing research trends, the purpose of this study was to investigate whether people's subjective career experiences relate to their psychological career resources and career orientations.

SUBJECTIVE WORK EXPERIENCES

In the context of this research, Coetzee and Bergh's (2009, 2) view of subjective work experiences is adopted. Individuals' subjective work experiences constitute their self-evaluations, perceptions, attitudes, feelings and psychological experiences which characterise their life satisfaction, job and career satisfaction, personal happiness and the meaning they attach to work (Coetzee, Bergh and Schreuder 2010, 179).

Life satisfaction encompasses individuals' global and subjective evaluation of the overall quality of their lives and whether all aspects of their lives are more or less in balance and proceeding according to their personal expectations (Diener, Gohm, Suh and Oishi 2000, 419; Gottfredson and Duffy 2008, 44). As this evaluation contributes to the level of personal happiness a person may experience, happiness is regarded as an important component of individuals' general life satisfaction and subjective well-being (Coetzee et al. 2010, 179; Perrone, Webb, Wright, Jackson and Ksiazak 2006; Seligman 2002; Snyder and Lopez 2002).

According to Coetzee et al. (2010, 179), *happiness* refers to an individual's emotional and cognitive perception and even physiological experience that his or her life is good and entails a minimal amount of pain. The happiness individuals experience at work is about mindfully making the best use of the resources they have at their disposal to help them overcome the challenges they face (Boehm and Lyubomirsky 2008, 101). People's sense of happiness energises and affects others, helps them to realise their potential and generally improves their performance (Coetzee et al. 2010, 179).

Coetzee et al. (2010, 179) describe *job/career satisfaction* as a cognition with affective components which results from individuals' perceptions about work, their immediate emotional reactions to their current job, and their satisfaction with their past and future work history taken as a whole. People's job/career satisfaction is regarded as a core measure of their experiences of intrinsic career success and life satisfaction (Coetzee and Bergh 2009, 3; Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller 2007; Schreuder and Coetzee 2011) resulting from their unfolding career and job experiences and their personal points of view, which may include pay and social position and issues such as well-being and emotions (Kidd 2008, 166).

The *meaning that people attach to work* is based on their perceptions of work fulfilling important needs relating to the economic functions of work and its potential to fulfill and satisfy other important roles and needs such as personal growth and skills development, self-esteem, psychological fulfillment, identity, social interaction, and sustaining a reasonable standard of living and status (Coetzee et al. 2010, 179 and 180; Harpaz and Fu 2002, 639). Work has been found to be related to job/career satisfaction, life satisfaction and happiness (Coetzee and Bergh 2009, 1; Coetzee et al. 2010, 177).

CAREER ORIENTATIONS AND SUBJECTIVE WORK EXPERIENCES

Career orientations has been defined by Schein (1978, 5) as a career anchor which refers to a pattern of self-perceived talents and abilities, basic values, and an evolved sense of motives and needs (as they pertain to a career) that influences a person's career-related decisions and sense of career success or satisfaction (Coetzee et al. 2010, 177; Schein 1996, 10). These self-perceived talents and abilities, values, motives and needs represent the person's career identity or self-concept and are reflected in the person's dominant career anchor (Schein 1978; 1990; 1996). Empirical evidence suggests that when individuals achieve congruence between their career anchors and their work environment they are more likely to achieve positive career outcomes (Feldman and Bolino 1996; 2000). Research also indicates individuals' need for congruence between their work and personal interests, and that individual preferences shift towards career anchors which are focused on the pursuit of personal interests along with meaningful work (Coetzee and Schreuder 2008). However, research evidence also suggests that people can have primary and secondary career anchors (Rodrigues and Guest 2010).

Schein's (1978; 1990; 1996) framework of career anchors is of relevance to the present study. According to this framework, people's career self-concepts (motives and values) are grounded in eight categories or anchors (Coetzee et al. 2010, 178 and 179): (1) *autonomy/independence*, which includes a person's need to be free of organisational constraints in order to pursue professional competence; (2) *technical/functional competence*, which is the motivation to develop one's technical or functional knowledge and expert skill; (3) *general managerial competence*, which can be described as the desire to attain a position that requires the application of interpersonal, political, analytical and financial skills associated with management; (4) *entrepreneurial/creativity*, the need to create or build (rather than manage) something that is entirely one's own project; (5) *lifestyle*, the need to integrate work, family, and self-concerns into a coherent lifestyle; (6) *pure challenge*, the need to test one's abilities by single-mindedly focusing on winning out over or competing with extremely tough opponents and solving a variety of challenging problems; (7) *service/dedication to a cause*, the need to align work activities with personal skills and values related to helping society and to improve the world in some fashion; and (8) *security/stability*, the need for job security (associated with benefit packages

and long-term employment) in an organisation and stability in a geographical area.

Research by Coetzee et al. (2010, 177) indicates that people's life and job/career satisfaction and sense of happiness seem to be influenced by the common values and motives that are inherent to people's career orientations. A study conducted by Steele and Francis-Smythe (2010) showed that career anchors can be matched to job roles and that an optimal fit between individuals' career anchors and the nature of their job roles increases their job satisfaction and organisational commitment. This leads to the study's first hypothesis:

- *H1*: Individuals' career orientations relate significantly to their subjective work experiences.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CAREER RESOURCES AND SUBJECTIVE WORK EXPERIENCES

In the context of this study, the psychological career resources model developed by Coetzee (2007; 2008, 32) is used as a theoretical framework. An individual's psychological career resources profile reflects his/her career consciousness. Coetzee (2007) describes career consciousness as people's conscious, career-related cognitions (that is, perceptions, awareness and self-evaluations) of their career preferences, values, skills, attitudes and behaviours that are understood and regarded by people as being helpful in realizing their goals and achieving career success. Coetzee (2008, 35) labels the various components that constitute an individual's repertoire of psychological resources as career preferences, career values, career drivers, career enablers and career harmonisers. A well-developed range of psychological career resources is an indication of conscious, self-directed career behavior that is internally guided and pro-actively driven by the individual.

People's *career preferences and values* guide their career decisions and represent their unique views about the paths their careers should follow. Individuals' career preferences guide their career moves and their career values represent the motivation for particular career preferences (Brousseau 1990, 46). The *career drivers* represent people's sense of career purpose, directedness and venturing orientation. These career-oriented attitudes energise people and motivate them towards experimenting with career and employment possibilities based on their perceptions of who they can become and their possible future work roles (Coetzee 2008, 35). Career directedness is described as individuals' sense of clarity about future career directions and goals as well as about where and how to find support for achieving their career goals or finding new job opportunities. The term 'career venturing' relates to individuals' willingness to take risks in finding and experimenting with new career opportunities (Coetzee 2008, 35).

Career enablers are people's transferable skills such as their practical or creative skills and self-management and relationship skills which generally help them to succeed in their careers. The *career harmonisers* are the psychological attributes that not only act as promoters of flexibility and resilience but also as controls by

keeping career drivers in balance so that people do not go overboard (or burn themselves out) in the process of pursuing and reinventing their careers. Coetzee (2008, 35) labels these attributes as self-esteem, behavioural adaptability, emotional literacy and social connectivity (the ability to connect with others, and establish and maintain mutually satisfying and supporting relationships). Self-esteem, behavioural adaptability, emotional literacy and social connectivity have also been related to experiences of subjective career success and well-being (Sinclair 2009).

Psychological career resources have been found to be linked to people's life and job/career satisfaction, perceptions of general employability and ability to deal resourcefully with life and career challenges (Coetzee and Bergh 2009, 1; Coetzee and Esterhuizen 2010, 1; Fugate et al. 2004, 14). Research by Coetzee and Schreuder (2009b, 1) indicates psychological career resources to be a significant predictor of people's career orientations. A well-established psychological career resources profile enables an individual to engage pro-actively in career self-management activities that enhance his or her job performance and experiences of subjective career success within a particular socio-cultural context (Coetzee 2008, 2; Ebberwein, Krieskok, Ulven and Prosser 2004, 292; Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden 2006, 449). This leads to our second hypothesis:

- *H2*: Individuals' psychological career resources relate significantly to their subjective work experiences.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The present study aims to assess whether people's career orientations and psychological career resources relate significantly to their subjective work experiences. Assessing whether people's career orientations and psychological career resources relate to their subjective work experiences may provide valuable information for career counselling and career development support practices in the contemporary world of work context.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were a random sample of employed students who were registered across various fields of study at a higher distance education institution for a particular year. The total sample of 2 997 participants constituted black (Africans, Indian and coloured) (67%) and white (33%) participants. The sample predominantly represented participants in full-time employment (80%), who occupied relatively high-level positions at senior and middle management levels (18%) as well as middle- and first-level supervisory levels (54%) in the service industry (81%). The sample included both females (58%) and males (42%). Most of the participants were in the early adulthood life stage (25–40 years) (82%). The mean age of the

participants was 32, which implies well-established internal career preferences and values (Schein, 1996, 80).

Measuring instruments

Subjective Work Experiences Scale (SWES)

The subjective work experiences scale (Bergh, 2009) is a 4-item scale that uses a 5-point Likert type scale to measure global self-perceived life satisfaction, job/career satisfaction, happiness and the perception of work as a valuable activity. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses confirmed the construct, convergent and discriminant validity of the subjective work experiences scale (Bergh 2009; Coetzee et al. 2010, 177). In terms of the present study, the subjective work experiences scale obtained an overall Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.65 (medium). The item-reliabilities for each of the four items were as follows: life satisfaction (0.45); job/career satisfaction (0.55); happiness (0.58), and work as valuable activity (0.71).

Career Orientations Inventory (COI)

The original COI (DeLong 1982a; 1982b, 60) is a self-rated measure containing 41 items. A 10-point Likert-type scale was used for subject responses on each of the 41 items. The COI provides a pretested instrument of which the internal validity and reliability have been demonstrated to be high (Burke 1983, 979; Custodio 2004; DeLong 1982a; 1982b, 60; Wood, Winston and Polkosnik 1985, 99). Custodio (2004) reports Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.84, while Coetzee and Schreuder (2008) report Cronbach Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.46 (lifestyle) to 0.85 (entrepreneurial creativity). Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analyses studies conducted by Coetzee and Schreuder (2009a, 1; 2009b, 1) confirmed the reliability and validity of the COI in the South African multi-cultural context. In terms of the present study, the following Cronbach alpha coefficients were obtained for each of the eight sub-scales: Technical/functional (0.61); security/stability (0.69); lifestyle (0.46); general managerial competence (0.82); autonomy/independence (0.71); service/dedication to a cause (0.78); pure challenge (0.77); entrepreneurial creativity (0.86).

Psychological Career Resources Inventory (PCRI)

The PCRI (Coetzee, 2007) is a self-rated multi-factorial measure containing 64 items and five subscales (career preferences, career values, career enablers, career drivers, career harmonizers). A 4-point Likert-type scale was used for subject responses to each of the 64 items. Exploratory factor analyses (Coetzee, 2007) confirmed the construct validity of the PCRI. Studies conducted by Coetzee (2008, 32), Coetzee and Bergh (2009, 1), Coetzee and Schreuder (2009b, 1) and Ferreira (2009) confirmed the reliability and validity of the PCRI in the South African context. In terms of the present study, the following Cronbach alpha coefficients were obtained for each of

the five sub-scales: career preferences (0.84); career values (0.74); career enablers (0.71); career drivers (0.78); and career harmonisers (0.88).

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha coefficients (Subjective Work Experiences Scale, Career Orientations Inventory and Psychological Career Resources Inventory) (N = 2 997)

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Subjective Work Experiences Scale Scale overall	0.65
Item reliabilities	
Generally I feel satisfied with my life (Life satisfaction)	0.45
I am satisfied in my job/career (Job/career satisfaction)	0.55
On average I am a happy person (Happiness)	0.58
Work is a valuable activity (Work valuable activity)	0.71
Career Orientations Inventory	
Technical/functional	0.61
Security/stability	0.69
Lifestyle	0.46
General managerial competence	0.82
Autonomy/Independence	0.71
Service/Dedication to a cause	0.78
Pure challenge	0.77
Entrepreneurial creativity	0.86
Psychological Career Resources Inventory	
Career Preferences Scale overall	0.84
Stability/Expertise	0.73
Managerial	0.75
Variety/Creativity	0.70
Freedom/Autonomy	0.62
Career values Scale overall	0.74
Growth/Development	0.74
Authority/Influence	0.61
Career enablers Scale overall	0.71
Practical/creative skills	0.68
Self/other skills	0.63
Career drivers Scale overall	0.78
Career Purpose	0.66

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Subjective Work Experiences Scale Scale overall	0.65
Career Directedness	0.63
Career Venturing	0.70
Career harmonisers Scale overall	0.88
Self-esteem	0.77
Behavioural adaptability	0.73
Emotional literacy	0.70
Social connectivity	0.67

Research procedure

Questionnaires were posted to a randomly selected number among 6 000 students registered at the higher education institution for the particular year using the postal facilities of the institution. Each questionnaire included a covering letter inviting subjects to participate in the study voluntarily and assuring them that their individual responses would remain confidential. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaires and return them by mail to the researchers using the return envelope. With regard to ethics, permission was obtained from the institution's research ethics committee. A cover letter stated that if participants completed the questionnaires and returned them, it would be assumed that they agreed to the results being used for research purposes only.

RESULTS

Hypothesis testing

The primary aim of the present study was to assess empirically whether people's career orientations and psychological career resources significantly predict their subjective work experiences. Stepwise regression analyses were carried out to identify the COI and PCRI variables that provided the best explanation of the dependent variables (the four SWES items). In order to obtain a better model fit and more precise estimates of the regression parameters, an ordinary least-squares multiple regression analysis was then performed to test *H1* and *H2*, using the COI and PCRI variables that had been identified by means of the stepwise procedures as the best predictors (Draper and Smith 1981).

Table 2 shows that the regression analyses produced statistically significant models ($F(p) \leq 0.000$). Although only small percentages of variance (ranging from $R^2 = 4\%$ to $R^2 = 12\%$; small practical effect size) (Cohen 1992) are explained by each of the models, useful pointers are provided regarding the influence of the participants' career orientations and psychological career resources on their subjective work experiences. The results provided supportive evidence for *H1* and *H2*.

Table 2: Summary of results of the five best COI and PCRI predictors of the Subjective Work Experiences Scale variables (N = 2 997)

Dependent variable	Subjective Work Experiences Scale							
	Generally I feel satisfied with my life		I am satisfied in my job/career		On average I am a happy person		Work is a valuable activity	
R^2	0.07		0.09		0.12		0.05	
Adjusted R^2	0.06+		0.09+		0.12+		0.04+	
ΔR^2	0.01		0.002		0.01		0.002	
Standard error of the estimate	1.05		1.14		0.72		0.72	
F	41.44***		57.57***		77.39***		28.54***	
df	5;2962		5;2959		5;2947		5;2952	
Sig.	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	
Independent variables	β	Step	β	Step	β	Step	β	Step
(constant)	2.35		3.02		2.51		3.13	
PCRI: Career preference: stability/expertise			-0.47*** 5					
PCRI: Career preference: managerial					-0.23*** 5			
PCRI: Career enabler: practical/creative skills							0.16*** 5	
PCRI: Career driver: career purpose							0.13*** 1	
PCRI: Career driver: career directedness	0.32***	3	0.29***	1				
PCRI: Career driver: career venturing	-0.10***	4	-0.05***	2				
PCRI: Career harmoniser: behavioral adaptability			0.13*** 4		0.32*** 1		0.03*** 2	
PCRI: Career harmoniser: self-esteem	0.25***	1			0.06*** 2			
COI: service/dedication to a cause							0.05 *** 4	
COI: pure challenge	-0.11***	2			-0.05*** 3		-0.05 *** 3	
COI: lifestyle	0.07***	5			0.08*** 4			
COI: entrepreneurial creativity			-0.11 *** 3					

Life satisfaction

*** $p \leq 0.001$ + $R^2 \geq 0.02 \leq 0.12$ (small practical effect size)

COI: Career Orientations Inventory

PCRI: Psychological Career Resources Inventory

Table 2 shows that life satisfaction is predicted most accurately by means of the career harmoniser self-esteem ($\beta = 0.25, p \leq 0.001$), followed by the pure challenge career orientation ($\beta = -0.11, p \leq 0.001$). It appears that the higher one's self-esteem, the higher one's general life satisfaction and the higher the need for opportunities to solve challenging problems in a competitive manner, the lower one's general satisfaction with life. Life satisfaction is positively predicted by career directedness ($\beta = 0.32, p \leq 0.001$) and the lifestyle career orientation ($\beta = 0.07, p \leq 0.001$) and negatively predicted by career venturing ($\beta = -0.10, p \leq 0.001$). These variables predicted 6% of the variance in life satisfaction, $F(5, 30) = 41.44, p \leq 0.000$.

Job/career satisfaction

Table 2 indicates that job/career satisfaction is best predicted by the career driver variables career directedness and career venturing. The results show that the higher the score on career venturing ($\beta = -0.05, p \leq 0.001$), entrepreneurial creativity ($\beta = -0.11, p \leq 0.001$) and stability/expertise ($\beta = -0.47, p \leq 0.001$), the lower the score on job/career satisfaction. On the other hand, the higher the score on career directedness ($\beta = 0.29, p \leq 0.001$) and behavioural adaptability ($\beta = 0.13, p \leq 0.001$), the higher the score on job/career satisfaction. These variables predicted 9% of the variance in life satisfaction, $F(5, 30) = 57.57, p \leq 0.000$.

Happiness

Happiness is positively predicted by firstly the career harmoniser behavioural adaptability ($\beta = 0.32, p \leq 0.001$), and negatively predicted by thirdly the pure challenge career orientation ($\beta = -0.05, p \leq 0.001$), and fifthly, the managerial career preference ($\beta = -0.23, p \leq 0.001$). General happiness is positively predicted by secondly self-esteem ($\beta = 0.06, p \leq 0.001$), and fourthly by the lifestyle career orientation ($\beta = 0.08, p \leq 0.001$). This regression model explains a more satisfactory 12% of the variance in happiness, $F(5, 29) = 77.39, p \leq 0.000$.

Work as a meaningful activity

The work as a meaningful activity variable produced the least satisfactory model, the PCRI and COI variables explaining only 4% of the variance in the dependent variable, $F(5, 30) = 28.54, p \leq 0.000$. Perceiving work as a valuable activity is positively predicted by firstly the career driver career purpose ($\beta = 0.13, p \leq 0.001$), and secondly the career harmoniser behavioural adaptability ($\beta = 0.03, p \leq 0.001$), and is negatively predicted by thirdly the career orientations pure challenge (thirdly) ($\beta = -0.05, p \leq 0.001$). Participants' perceptions of work as a valuable activity is positively predicted by the service/dedication to a cause (fourthly) ($\beta = 0.05, p \leq 0.001$) and by the career enabler practical/creative skills (fifth) ($\beta = 0.16, p \leq 0.001$).

DISCUSSION

The present study investigated whether people's career orientations and psychological career resources relate significantly to their subjective work experiences. Overall, the correlation and regression analyses indicated significant relationships between the variables.

The results suggest that positive self-views (self-esteem) significantly influence participants' general satisfaction with their lives as well as their sense of happiness. Positive self-esteem has also been related to perceived subjective career success (Sinclair 2009) and optimism about life in general (Coetzee and Esterhuizen 2010, 1). Elliot, Sheldon and Church (1997, 915) found that people who perceive themselves positively tend to pursue self-concordant career and work goals to a greater extent than people with a negative self-view. Research by Judge, Bono, Erez and Locke

(2005, 257) found that people with self-concordant goals (that is, goals that are concordant with their ideals, interests, and values) are found to be generally happier and have higher life satisfaction and job/career satisfaction than those who pursue goals for other reasons. People who are more self-positive tend to choose the goals that have the best chance to make them happy with their jobs and lives.

The results also suggest that having career-directedness (clarity regarding future career options and goals), and a low need for venturing out towards new career and organisational contexts (and by implication, preferring steady, stable employment) may lead to high levels of life satisfaction and job/career satisfaction. Kidd (2008, 166) found that having positive thoughts and clarity about the future to be related to positive career experiences or feelings. Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010, 1) found that having clarity about one's career goals stimulates health-promoting behaviours that lead to an increase in one's physical and emotional well-being as well as an optimistic attitude towards oneself and one's life in general. In addition, having the practical and creative skills to plan and manage one's career goals appears to increase participants' perceptions of work being a valuable activity.

The results further indicate that those participants who regard work as a valuable activity also tend to embrace a strong sense of career purpose and appear to be motivated by the service/dedication to a cause career orientation. Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin and Schwartz (1997, 21) state that people who feel a strong calling to their careers and jobs, report far higher levels of life and job satisfaction and lower levels of absenteeism, than do people who merely have a job and/or career orientation. People with a calling orientation (or a strong sense of career purpose), tend to work for the fulfillment their jobs and careers offer and, in addition, believe that their work has some impact on society (Bellah, Sullivan, Tipton, Madsen and Swindler 1996, 5). Schein (1990, 10) posits that people with a service/dedication to a cause career anchor tend to be more concerned with finding jobs that conform to their values of helping others and interacting with others than with focusing on career progression.

It is interesting to observe that a low need for jobs that offer stability and allow one predominantly to focus on developing one's expertise in a specific area (and by implication a stronger need for exposure to a variety of new and challenging tasks) seem to contribute to participants' sense of job/career satisfaction. Similarly, the ability to deal successfully with setbacks and new challenges (or being behaviourally adaptable) has a positive influence on participants' sense of job/career satisfaction, happiness and their perception of work being a valuable activity. Robson, Hanson, Abalos and Booth (2006, 156) and Arthur et al. (2005, 177) found in this regard that behavioural adaptability, positive relationships, occupational growth, personal security (rather than job security) and a continued focus on and achievement of goals contributed positively to experiences of objective and subjective career success, career satisfaction, job satisfaction and life satisfaction.

While participants with a lifestyle career orientation appear to have a higher sense of life satisfaction and happiness, those motivated by the entrepreneurial career

orientation seem to be significantly more dissatisfied with their lives. Participants who seem to be motivated by the pure challenge career orientation and managerial career preference also indicated a significantly lower sense of happiness. Research by Kidd (2008, 166) also indicates work-life issues to be related to positive or negative career experiences or emotions. Coetzee and Schreuder (2009a, 1) found the entrepreneurial creativity, pure challenge and general management career orientations to be associated with a need for constant achievement, status, personal power and a sense of being in control, which are often linked to these career orientations (Lee and Wong 2004, 7), and which in the context of the present study seem to influence participants' sense of happiness and general life satisfaction negatively.

Conclusions: Implications for practice and research

The findings of this study have implications for career counselling, for managers responsible for providing career development support, and for further research. In agreement with findings by Coetzee et al. (2010, 177), the results point to the need for career counsellors to assess the inner career orientations and psychological career resources of employees as these provide valuable information regarding the motives and values influencing their life and job/career satisfaction, sense of happiness and perceptions of work as a valuable activity. It is suggested that educating and coaching the participants in the career meta-skills that underpin individuals' inner career orientations and psychological career resources may lead to higher levels of life and job/career satisfaction.

Managers need to be alert to the motives and values underlying the participants' career anchors and how these relate to their job/career satisfaction. Favourable organisational conditions and career development support practices that foster the expression of self-concordant goals relating to employees' core self-evaluations and inner career needs, values and interests (as reflected in their repertoire of career orientations and psychological career resources) may invoke higher levels of life and job/career satisfaction, happiness and perceiving work as a valuable activity. Career development support practices and resources are regarded to be important in facilitating proactive career behaviours which lead to experiences of career success and well-being (Barnett and Bradley 2007, 617; Schreuder and Coetzee 2011).

Methodological limitations and future directions in research

Considering that the percentage variance explained by the prediction models was relatively small in terms of practical effect size, the findings also highlighted the need for further research in exploring the associations between working adults' career orientations, their psychological career resources and their subjective work experiences. Notwithstanding the results, the practical value of the findings lies in the new knowledge gained regarding the relationship between these variables.

Since the present study has been limited to participants predominantly employed in the service industry in the South African organisational context, the findings cannot be generalised to other occupational contexts. Considering that people's career self-

concepts evolve and change as they encounter new situations or transitions in their lives, it may be useful to conduct a longitudinal study to deepen one's understanding of the relationship between people's career anchors, psychological resources and subjective work experiences over the life course of the individual.

Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of the research design, this study can yield no statements about causation. Associations between the variables have therefore been interpreted rather than established. These findings therefore need to be replicated with broader samples across various age, gender, race and occupational groups in various economic sectors before broader conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between employees' career orientations, psychological career resources and subjective work experiences.

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