



# An Investigation on the Dominant Career Anchors of Faculty Members: The Case of Mersin University\*

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## Abstract

Due to social, economic, and political changes, as well as changing institutional priorities, the permeation of managerialism has impelled universities to redefine the roles and functions of its faculty members. Therefore, researchers from various disciplines have focused on the career choices and paths of such members. In this context, the purpose of the present study is to identify the dominant career anchors of faculty members and examine these anchors in regard to their academic status, gender, marital status, and administrative position ) in their organization. The sample consisted of 306 faculty members of nine faculties at Mersin University. The data, obtained by the Career Anchors Scale, were first developed through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses by the researchers, and then analyzed using descriptive statistics, a t-test, and a one way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The analyses revealed that the dominant career anchors of the faculty members were job security, service and dedication, and autonomy independence. Furthermore, significant differences were observed in the career anchors of faculty members with respect to their academic status, gender, marital status, and administrative position in their organization. These results suggest that faculty members value a career that not only ensures economic security and stability but also allows maintenance of a healthy work-life balance.

## Keywords

Academic Profession, Career Anchors, Faculty Members, Higher Education, University.

Today, most organizations have been deeply influenced by a highly dynamic environment in which technology, economic conditions, political circumstances, and social/cultural values continue to evolve at an ever rapid rate. Schein (1990, p. 1) stated that these environmental changes make it almost impossible to clearly think about the planning process: “the fundamental problem that all organizations face when they attempt to plan for their human resources is that they have to match the ever changing needs of the organization with the

ever changing needs of the employees.” In addition, it has been proposed that organizations must have a better understanding of the changing nature of work and the dynamics of the internal career (i.e., the self-image that employees establish in regard to their work-life balance) in order to overcome the negative effects of environmental changes (Kaynak, 2002; Schein, 1978, 1990).

Like other large organizations, universities are deeply influenced by both national and international

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social, economic and political developments (Aypay, 2003; Şimşek, 1999). Marginson (2000) emphasized that, due to globalization and the pressures and opportunities created in this more intensive and extensive international environment, the following has occurred: a crisis of values and university identity in the era of corporate reform; the emergence of more professionalized management; the slippage of collegial ideals and collegial systems of governance; and the deconstruction of academic professionalism itself (p. 23). Thus, universities need to redefine “what they are” and “what they do” to survive under such changing social, economic and political contexts (Billiot, 2010; Froman, 1999).

It has been proposed that the permeation of managerialism into university operations is necessary as a result of these social, economic, and political changes (Churchman, 2006). Although universities have been historically viewed as a collective of scholars who give priority to collegiality, collaborative management, academic freedom, ideological rewards, and peer esteem, they currently face revised institutional values demanding the ideological engagement and endorsement of economic and managerial priorities. Changes in the priorities of institutions have led faculty members to redefine their identities as well as those of their colleagues. More specifically, it has been argued that such changing priorities have required faculty members to adjust their understanding of academic roles as well as the meanings of assigned academic tasks (Billiot, 2010; Churchman, 2006). Meanwhile, researchers in the fields of sociology, social psychology, management, and communication have shown particular interest in the organizational structure of universities, academic professions, academic careers, identities and cultures, scientific and professional ethics, as well as the overall nature of academic work (Adams, 1998; Altbach, 1995; Barnett, 1993; Baruch & Hall, 2004; Edwards, 1999; Gürkanlar, 2010; Harley, Muller-Camen, & Collin, 2004; Jacob & Hellström, 2003; Kerr, 1994; Leong & Leung, 2004; Marginson, 2000; Tapper & Palfreyman, 1998).

Moreover, Lindholm (2004) stated that, although society has unquestioningly trusted universities and allowed their faculty members to pursue individual work in the past, society now expects the same members to have the social responsibility to contribute to the welfare of their institutions and the larger community. Lindholm also emphasized that this expectancy requires an examination of the career development of faculty members (especially

that of newer faculty members), regardless of the complex nature of academic career development processes.

In the related literature, academic careers have been studied according to various variables such as gender, marital status, and position in the organization (Bogenschutz, 1987; Harley et al., 2004; Leong & Leung, 2004; Lindholm, 2004; Martin, 2008; Özkanlı & White, 2008; Quesenberry & Trauth, 2007; Rabe & Rugunanan, 2011; Riordan & Louw-Potgieter, 2011; Russell, 2010). In these studies, it was found that faculty members value academic freedom, autonomy, and intellectual contexts. Moreover, when academic careers in terms of gender were reviewed, it was observed that the majority examined the barriers of womens' career success or progression in academic environments (Buday, Stake, & Peterson, 2012; Conley, 2005; Özbilgin & Healy, 2004; Özkanlı & White, 2008; Riordan & Louw-Potgieter, 2011).

In sum, the concept of career anchors becomes especially applicable in today's turbulent world. Based on these aforementioned explanations, it is obvious that universities need to improve the process by which work is matched to its faculty members in order to improve career planning as well as maintain effectiveness in such an increasingly dynamic environment. The success of this matching process mainly depends upon career occupants being open and clear about their individual career anchors. With this background, this research identifies the dominant career anchors of faculty members and examines these in regard to their gender, marital status, title, and administrative position (current or previous) in their organization.

### Career Anchors

To survive in a highly dynamic environment, it is important that organizations not only match the changing needs of the organization itself, but also the needs of their employees (Argüden, 1998; Can, 2007). The success of this process requires that two basic dimensions be the subject of focus: external career and internal career. External career refers to stages and roles that are formally rewarded by organizations and determined by organizational policies, while internal career is related to the self-concept of employees with respect to their expectations and career development (Raymond, 1999; Riordan & Louw-Potgieter, 2011; Sav, 2008; Tan & Quek, 2001). Schein (1990) stressed that an organization must not only focus on the changing

nature of work, but also focus on the dynamics of the internal career in order to maintain pace with such a highly dynamic environment. Schein (2006) also stated that a career anchor forms an intrinsic part of the career self-concept by acting as a basic career motive. In other words, a career anchor functions as a driving force behind certain career decisions and choices and thus, it is seen as an important element of individuals' internal careers.

The concept of career anchor emerged as a result of a 12-year longitudinal study initiated by Schein in the 1960s (Schein, 1978, 1990). In his study, the participants consisted of 44 Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sloan School alumni who were interviewed about their work attitudes and values as well as their career choices and changes. As a result, Schein identified some patterns (namely, career anchors) that functioned in a person's worklife as a way of evaluating work experience and underpinning her/his reasons for working and changing jobs (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2009; Evans, 1996; Schein, 2006). In addition, Schein (1978; 1990; 1996) proposed that most people's self-concepts revolved around eight categories reflecting basic values, motives, and needs: autonomy/independence, security/stability, technical-functional competence, general managerial competence, entrepreneurial creativity, service or dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle.

A person's career anchor is mainly related to the his/her self-concept comprised of self-perceived talents and abilities, basic values, the evolved sense of motives, and needs as they pertain to the career (De Long, 1987; Evans, 1996; Schein, 1990, 1996, 2006). Furthermore, one's career anchor evolves only as he/she gains occupational and life experience and once the self-concept has been formed, it functions as a stabilizing force. Thus, a career anchor can be thought of as the values and motives that the person will not give up if forced to make a choice. Similarly, it has been stated that a career anchor refers to a person's orientation toward work and approach to his/her work based on a combination of perceived areas, such as competence, motives, and values, related to professional work choices (Beck & Lopa, 2001; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2009; Hsu, Jiang, Klein, & Tang, 2003). For this reason, it is important to be aware of these values and motives so that individuals can make wise decisions when choices have to be made.

Although Schein proposed that each individual has only one career anchor, some researchers have stressed that one to three anchors tend to cluster

together to form a person's career choices (Chapman, 2009; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2009; DeLong, 1982, 1987; Feldman & Bolino, 1996). In addition, Schein's eight career anchors have been re-categorized into three distinct groupings, based on the inherent motivations underlying the various career anchors (Feldman & Bolino, 1996; Schein, 1978): talent-based, needs-based, and value-based anchors. The talent-based anchors include managerial competence, technical/functional competence, and entrepreneurial creativity, while the needs-based anchors are composed of security and stability, autonomy and independence, and lifestyle motivations. Finally, value-based anchors consist of pure challenge and service or dedication to a cause.

## Method

### Participants

Mersin University (MEU), from which the faculty was selected as a case for this study, is one of the 103 publicly founded universities in Turkey. MEU has 13 faculties and 12 vocational schools (Mersin Üniversitesi, 2013). The population of this study consists of the entire faculty (including professors, associate professors, assistant professors, instructors, specialists, lecturers and research assistants) at MEU. The sampling was comprised of 306 faculty members employed at nine faculties at MEU. Out of the 306 faculty members, 141 were female (46.1%) and 165 were male (53.9%). The mean age of the sample was 38.10 with an age range between 23 and 65 years ( $S = 9.02$ ). Moreover, out of the 306 faculty members, 112 were single (36.6%), 191 were married (62.4%), 80 currently had an administrative position (26.1%), and 225 had a previous administrative position (73.5%).

### Data Collection

The data, obtained by the Career Anchors Scale, was developed through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses by the researchers. The measure was constructed by adopting items used in existing measures (Aktaş, 2004; Chandler & Jansen, 1991; Erdoğan, 2004; Igbaria & Baroudi, 1993; Schein, 1990). Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to test specific predictions concerning the structure of the measure (Bentler, 1990, 1995; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1999; Kline, 1998; Schumacker & Lomax, 1996; Steiger, 1990). The findings of the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses revealed that the measure included nine

factors with 28 items. Similarly, the measure of nine factors was also found in previous studies (Crepeau, Croock, Goslar, & McMurtrey, 1992; Igarbia, Greenhaus, & Parasuraman, 1991; Nordvik, 1996; Petroni, 2000; Sumner, Yager, & Franke, 2005). Finally, the reliability coefficients for the factors ranged from .71 to .84.

### Data Analysis

In the present study, the statistical analyses were conducted through the following steps. First, a descriptive analysis was performed to identify the dominant career anchors of the faculty members. Then, in order to examine these careers anchors in regard to the faculty members' gender, marital status, title, and administrative position (current or previous) in their organization, a one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test were used to analyze the data.

### Results

A descriptive statistical analysis provided evidence that the career anchors of the faculty members included job security ( $\bar{X}_{\text{job security}} = 3.48$ ), service and dedication ( $\bar{X}_{\text{service and dedication}} = 3.41$ ), autonomy-independence ( $\bar{X}_{\text{autonomy-independence}} = 3.31$ ), lifestyle ( $\bar{X}_{\text{lifestyle}} = 3.26$ ), technical- functional competence ( $\bar{X}_{\text{technical-functional competence}} = 3.21$ ), pure challenge ( $\bar{X}_{\text{pure challenge}} = 2.60$ ), geographical security ( $\bar{X}_{\text{geographical security}} = 2.42$ ), entrepreneurial creativity ( $\bar{X}_{\text{entrepreneurial creativity}} = 2.13$ ), and general managerial competence ( $\bar{X}_{\text{general managerial competence}} = 2.05$ ). Based on the results, it was observed that job security, service and dedication, and autonomy-independence obtained the highest scores.

Assessing the differences for the career anchors of the faculty members with respect to their academic status, a one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences for one career anchor in particular: general managerial competence [ $F_{(6,299)} = 3.445, p < .05$ ]. In addition, the findings of post hoc least significant difference (LSD) tests indicated that professors ( $M = 9.65, SD = 3.26$ ) significantly more likely valued general managerial competence than assistant professors ( $M = 7.80, SD = 2.81$ ) and instructors ( $M = 6.72, SD = 2.65$ ). Similar differences were also observed between associate professors ( $M = 8.39, SD = 3.46$ ) and instructors ( $M = 6.72, SD = 2.65$ ); assistant professors ( $M = 7.80, SD = 2.81$ ) and research assistants ( $M = 8.97, SD = 3.36$ ); and instructors ( $M = 6.72, SD = 2.65$ ) and research assistants ( $M = 8.58, SS = 3.58$ ).

The results also indicated that there was a significant difference between gender for five of the nine career anchors; namely, job security [ $t_{(304)} = 4.41, p < .05$ ], service and dedication [ $t_{(304)} = 3.06, p < .05$ ], lifestyle [ $t_{(304)} = 4.73, p < .05$ ], technical-functional competence [ $t_{(304)} = 2.19, p < .05$ ], and geographical security [ $t_{(304)} = -9.49, p < .05$ ]. Moreover, females expressed a greater concern for all five career anchors compared to the males.

When the marital status of the participants was taken into consideration, the results showed that there was a significant difference between single and married faculty members. For example, geographical security was more important for married faculty members [ $t_{(304)} = -1.91, p < .05$ ], while general managerial competence appeared to be of more prominence for their single counterparts [ $t_{(304)} = 2.03, p < .05$ ].

Finally, when examining career anchors in regard to having (or had) an administrative position, the results of the independent sample *t*-tests indicated that there was only a significant difference between faculty members for the general managerial competence anchor [ $t_{(304)} = 2.91, p < .05$ ]. More specifically, faculty members who currently have an administrative position give much more priority to the general managerial competence anchor.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Previous researchers have stressed that one to three anchors tend to cluster together to form a person's career choices, even though Schein (1996) proposed that a person has only one career anchor (Chapman, 2009; Coetzee & Scheruder, 2009; DeLong, 1987; Feldman & Bolino, 1996; Ramakrishna & Potosky, 2003; Suutari & Taka 2004). Considering the results of the analyses, it may be proposed that the dominant career anchors of the faculty members include job security, service and dedication, and autonomy-independence. Security-focused people primarily seek stability and continuity in their lives and they are motivated by a long-term attachment to their respective organizations. Such people are also concerned with jobs that will make them economically secure and stable (Schein, 1978). This result seems to be related to the promotion system based on publications and other criteria in Turkey (Yükseköğretim Kurumu [YÖK], 2012a; 2012b). It has been argued that faculty members value being economically secure in their jobs, especially when do not receive adequate financial support for research and collegial relationships in

their work environment (Rabe & Rugunanan, 2011; Russell, 2010). Furthermore, education is seen as a field that improves the lives of others, and thus the academic profession is associated with the service and dedication anchor (Riordan & Louw-Potgieter, 2011). Individuals with this career anchor value can help create a more humane work environment, which ultimately improves one's work-life balance. This result seems to be acceptable when considering the service and teaching functions of university faculty members.

Moreover, individuals with autonomy and independence seek work that allow them not only to control their work-life balance, but also to resist all forms of regimentation, such as organizational rules and policies, work hours, etc. Similar to the results of this study, other research findings have showed that intellectual freedom, pursuing personal interests, and autonomy were the most compelling attractors to academic work (Lindholm, 2004; Rabe & Rugunanan, 2011). In addition, autonomy was also related to the nature of academic work (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Clark, 1983, 1987, 2000; Etzioni, 2000; Gizir, 2005).

Furthermore, it was observed that there were some significant differences in the career anchors of faculty members with respect to their academic status, gender, marital status, and having a current administrative position. By assessing the differences for the career anchors of faculty members with respect to their academic status, the analysis revealed significant differences for one career anchor in particular: general managerial competence. Based on this result, it may be proposed that professors have certain beliefs regarding their administrative skills and they have higher motivation compared to other faculty members. In addition, the results of the analysis regarding gender indicated that life style, job security, technical-functional competence, service and dedication, and geographical security were relatively prominent career anchors for female faculty members when compared to their male counterparts. Similarly, related research has indicated that working women especially value this career anchor (Igbaria et al., 1991; Tan & Quek, 2001; Weber & Ladkin, 2009). Individuals with this

career anchor give priority to work-life balance and they search for work that supports strong pro-family values and programs (Pilavcı, 2007).

The academic profession includes various responsibilities that make it an extremely complex work environment (Jacobs, 2008; Lynch, 2008). In the literature, it has been stated that female faculty members have home-related or care-giving responsibilities, such as being mothers and wives, in addition to their professional roles as researchers or administrators. Thus, they value a healthy balance between their careers with their home-related responsibilities (Buday et al., 2012; Özkanlı & White, 2008; Weber & Ladkin, 2009). Based on similar reasons, female faculty members tend to give priority to job and geographical security anchors, which refers to work that does not require travel and relocation (Petroni, 2000).

As a result of the analysis regarding marital status, it was observed that married faculty members were anchored in geographical security, while single ones were anchored in general managerial competence. These findings seem to be acceptable when considering the familial responsibilities of married faculty members. In addition, these faculty members with administrative positions are responsible for organizing, leading, mediating, supervising, etc., all of which require additional time and energy (Kowalski, 2003). Thus, it may be concluded that married faculty members do not give priority to the general managerial competence anchor.

Finally, considering the results, it can be concluded that faculty members view their careers in terms of certain core values and motives that are primarily concerned with work that promotes economic security and stability as well as a healthy work-life balance. However, it must be noted that the results of this study need to be considered as descriptive of faculty members' career anchors based only on a certain time and place. That is, although faculty members in various institutions of higher education may likely share common values and motives regarding their work-related choices, caution must be used in generalizing the results reported in this study.

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