Chapter 9
Career Concerns, Career Satisfaction and Career Wellbeing as Contemporary Human Resources Management Issues: Theoretical Perspective

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Abstract Since the contemporary world of work is departmentalised for efficient and effective functioning, individuals with certain similar competencies and skills are deliberately grouped in units and divisions. Consequently, the terms specialisation and professionalism have emerged, which in turn have given birth to various career-related concepts. Career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing are notable career-related concepts presently attracting the attention of scholars and practitioners, especially in the fields of industrial/organisational psychology and business management. The career concepts of concerns, satisfaction and wellbeing are regarded as important because of their dynamic nature and significant impact on individual employees, employers, corporate organisations, and the national economy. Although career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing are inter-related and generic across the sectorial divisions, variations are often experienced, probably because of individual differences and the nature of the three concepts. The objective of this chapter is to explore the relationship between career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing.

Keywords Career concerns · Career satisfaction · Career wellbeing · Employee · Organisation

9.1 Introduction

Career plays an integral role in the life of most people (Leutner & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2018). In the 21st Century, a person rarely introduces themself to others as an entry level employee, middle or management level, without referring to their profession. Even if an individual is self-employed, they are probably identified by a chosen line of entrepreneurial activities. This status makes them useful and resourceful to self, clients,

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colleagues and doubtlessly to the immediate community where the vocation is being practised. Among the common aspirations of human beings, is the desire to become a 'force to reckon with'. To this effect, a very instrumental means of making oneself recognisable and relevant is by earnestly pursuing a career that accommodates, unravels and promotes one's endowed potentials with a convincing intent of making psychological, social and economic gains (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2017). Based on the abovementioned information, the phenomenon of career is given a scholarly consideration in this chapter. Specifically, the chapter focuses on career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing.

9.2 Chapter Objective

The objective of this chapter is to explore the relationship between career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing.

9.3 Differences Among Career Concerns, Career Satisfaction and Career Wellbeing

Although the phenomena career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing are interrelated or interconnected, they differ in conceptualisation, application and operationalisation, especially in the fields of human resources management and industrial/organisational psychology (Dries & Coetzee, 2010). Career concerns are defined as the usual kinds of worries and anxieties commonly experienced by new entrants into vocational paths (Bal, Arikan, & Çalişkan, 2016). In other words, career concerns are the immediate psychological consequences frequently faced by fresh graduate employees, who by virtue of only the theoretical knowledge obtained at the tertiary institutions, have developed interests in, and chosen to venture into life-long vocations, without possessing the human capital prerequisites for success. For instance, it is a common occurrence for fresh graduate employees to experience some confusion regarding which career path to follow amidst the numerous available options (Smail, 2017).

According to Lim and Teo (1999), the following are some of the shared career worries associated with new entrant employees:

- fear of not getting far in the career
- fear of their potential being unravelled
- fear of not achieving the set career goals
- fear of being trapped in the present job
- fear of knowledge becoming obsolete
- unclear career prospects
- fear of being undervalued by their employer

- inadequate training and development
- inadequate pay relative to the amount of work expected to complete.

Daniels, Stewart, Stupnisky, Perry, and Verso (2011) referred to Lim and Teo's (1999) list of career worries, and coined the term Early Career Anxiety Syndrome. Continuous experience of Early Career Anxiety Syndrome, without prompt managerial interventions, may result in the human resources psychological condition called career stress, which may have a concomitant negative effect on career satisfaction and career wellbeing (Daniels et al., 2011).

Career satisfaction on the other hand, is an essential human resources management concept that has recently attracted the attention of scholars and practitioners (Alva & Lobo, 2016; Essary et al., 2018). It is important to note at this point that career satisfaction is different from job satisfaction in the same way that the term career differs from job (Davis, 2015; Lounsbury, Moffitt, Gibson, Drost, & Stevens, 2007). Career satisfaction is defined as a psychological concept that explains an individual's expression of joy, happiness and contentment with their chosen line of specialisation within the broad scope of a profession being practised (Spurk, Abele, & Volmer, 2014). However, job satisfaction is referred to as a psychological concept that describes the career individual's expression of joy, happiness and contentment with their chosen occupation (Mitonga-Monga, Flotman, & Cilliers, 2018). A person's career is therefore located in a given job, and it is personal while job is generic.

In regard to a medical job, there are different careers, and each has a path that a new entrant can follow, from the entry level to the topmost level (Halcomb, Smyth, & Mclnnes, 2018; Sarna & Strawn, 2017; Tsoi, Teitge, Madan, & Francescutti, 2016). It is easier for a career person to change their job than it is to change the career they practise. Similarly, a career person can change their employer, but may not be comfortable changing the chosen area of expertise. A practical example is the case of 'Professor Jonas' who decided to resign his academic employment with 'the Purviews University', where he was saddled with the duties of teaching, assessment, and research, and accepted the offer of Director of Research in a research institute. This example illustrates that Professor Jonas was able to retain his career as academician by changing his job to focus mainly on research, rather than combining the tripartite duties of teaching, assessment and research as in his previous employment. Similarly, in the banking industry, you could have a diverse set of career persons such as legal officers, auditors, fund transfer officers, marketers, information technologists, stock brokers etc. in the same organisation (Giragama & Sooriyabandara, 2017; Mehta, 2016).

Career wellbeing is a very essential part of the complete concept of wellbeing. Wellbeing is broad in scope. It covers the following important areas of an individual's life: social, community, physical, financial, career and mental wellbeing (Rath & Harter, 2010). The different aspects of wellbeing combined are referred to as psychosocial wellbeing (Evarist, 2018). The focus of this chapter is on the career aspect of wellbeing, because it is arguably the most essential of the six aspects of wellbeing, such that if it is not well addressed in an individual's life, the person will

struggle to become stable in all other aspects mentioned. Further, career wellbeing can be defined as an important aspect of individuals' lives that keeps them regularly engaged in sustainable livelihood activities, which promote their social, financial, physical, community, and mental wellbeing (Cotton & Hart, 2003).

For instance, we all need something to do, and ideally something to look forward to, when we wake up every day. It helps to develop and maintain our cognitive processes, and keeps us mentally sound. In other words, what you spend your time doing each day shapes your identity, whether you are a student, parent, volunteer, retiree, or have a more conventional job (Rath & Harter, 2010).

9.4   Conceptual Description and Definition of Variables

9.4.1   Career

Super and Bachrach (1957) conceptualised career as "the sequence of occupations, jobs, and positions, which a person has been engaged throughout his or her working life. The structured sequence of events in the life of a person as he progresses in a job or as he changes from one job to another in the occupation structure" (p. 131). Moreover, career is considered as a series of positions occupied by a person as a means of preparing to earn or withdraw from the earnings of a livelihood (Super & Bohn, 1970). "Viewed sociologically, career is a series of roles played by a person, in which the nature of each role played, the way in which it is played, and the situation in which it is played has some bearing on the nature of the next role in the series. Viewed psychologically, a career is also a series of roles played by a person, the choice of and success in which are determined in part by the aptitudes, interests, values, needs, prior experiences, and expectations of the person in question" (p. 113).

9.4.2   Career Concerns

Employee career concerns imply the mental evaluation of self and the corporate reaction to and addressing of employees' surfacing career development needs, prospects and ambitions in relation to dynamic situations at the place of work (Potgieter, Coetzee, & Ferreira, 2018). Career concerns as a variable is interchangeably used with the concept of psychosocial career preoccupation. The term psychosocial career preoccupation describes a mental state of individuals' experiencing certain concerns about their career developmental tasks in their mind at a particular time (Coetzee, 2016). Currently, the common concern of some employees is the possibility of progressing through their chosen career ladders, particularly if the prospects of advancing their vocations are not certain or non-existence (Nawaz & Pangil's, 2016).

The concept of career concerns comprises certain issues connected to work and psychological health, wellbeing, scholarly achievement, social, and family systems. From the perspective of counselling psychology, professional counsellors encounter career concerns in their practice, because career is one of the eminent elements in the structure of clients' lives (Hutchison, 2015). It is also described as employee worries concerning their new job disappointment, apprehension concerning the present official duties and pressure of preparation for an upcoming corporate assignment (Yousefi, Abedi, Baghban, Eatemadi, & Abedi, 2011). Although career concerns may shape career success in some cases, this is not the case with all employees (Yousefi et al., 2011). Thus, scholars summarised career concerns as current fear about handling that which an employee views to be essential to their career growth (Yousefi et al., 2011). To adolescents, career and grade matters are basic worries, while the general population's concerns originate from primary factors of career, health, personal and social (Code, 2004).

9.4.3 Career Satisfaction

Career satisfaction has been defined in relation to employee practice and work (Domagała, Peña-Sánchez, & Dubas-Jakóbczyk, 2018). Career satisfaction can be understood as the satisfaction with different dimensions related to one's chosen career. Thus, career satisfaction is a multidimensional concept associated with environmental factors such as working conditions, task variety, workload, and career prospects (Domagała, Peña-Sánchez, & Dubas-Jakóbczyk, 2018).

Furthermore, career satisfaction is an essential concept. It embodies the general way an individual perceives the lifetime of work, which is projected to be around 100,000 h, and includes all the various activities and experiences that comprise a career (Lounsbury, Moffitt, Gibson, Drost, & Stevens, 2007). Thus, career satisfaction is mainly a matter of employees comparing their career prospects with others in a similar career. More precisely, career satisfaction is defined as an individual's satisfaction with both the internal and external features of their career (Hsu & Tsai, 2014). It is a subjective feeling, which individuals experience when appraising career growth and achievement without appropriate and objective measurement. Further, career satisfaction signifies an association with the procedure of work, because broad career satisfaction is a vital element for career success.

In the same vein, Yap, Cukier, Holmes, and Hanna (2010) defined career satisfaction as a subjective measure, which involves an employee's perception of their gratification with the overall set of career goals such as income, progression, development of innovative and relevant skills. Career satisfaction is a perceptual measure as it does not only incorporate a person's self-referent description of career accomplishment, but it also has consequences for human resources managers (Yap, Holmes, Hanna, & Cukier, 2013). Consequences of career dissatisfaction can also take the form of negative psychological reactions like employees' disengagement

and intention to leave, to the extent that dissatisfied employees will be less involved in their work, and perhaps frequently exhibit a high tendency to change employers (Yap, Holmes, Hanna, & Cukier, 2013).

9.4.4 Career Wellbeing

Career wellbeing is described as the level of satisfaction, which employees have with their careers over time (Bester, 2018). Career wellbeing has its root in subjective wellbeing, and it is used to explain employees' subjective affects in connection with their career experiences (Bester, 2018). Rath and Harter (2010) introduced their report on career wellbeing with the following question, "Do you like what you do each day?" Rath and Harter (2010) continued, "This might be the most basic, yet important, wellbeing question we can ask ourselves. Yet only 20% of people give a strong "yes" in response. At a fundamental level, you need something to do, and ideally something to look forward to, when you wake up every day. What you spend your time doing each day shapes your identity, whether you are a student, parent, volunteer, retiree, or have a more conventional job" (p. 15).

Rath and Harter (2010) postulated that individuals typically undervalue the effect of career wellbeing on their general wellbeing, "If you don't have the opportunity to regularly do something you enjoy … the odds of your having high wellbeing in other areas diminishes rapidly. People with high career Wellbeing are more than twice as likely to be thriving in their lives overall" (p. 16). Highlighted below with their corresponding questions, are the five components of wellbeing described by Rath and Harter (2010):

1. Social wellbeing: Do I have strong relationships and love in my life?
2. Physical wellbeing: Do I have the health and energy to do what I want to do each day?
3. Career wellbeing: Do I like what I do each day?
4. Financial wellbeing: Am I effective in managing my economic life?
5. Community wellbeing: Am I engaged with my community, the area I live in?

Career wellbeing is presumed to be a continuous assessment of a person's career experiences over a certain period, and shows the level of fulfilment the person experiences in their career (Kidd, 2008). When employees are displeased with areas of their career wellbeing, they may consequently exhibit proactive and adaptive behaviour to them correct the aspects of displeasure. Career wellbeing is different from work wellbeing, because of the time component involved (Kidd, 2008). In other words, career wellbeing emphasises an individual's wellbeing over time while work wellbeing focuses on an individual's wellbeing at a specific point in time (Bester, 2018).

9.5 Significance of 21st Century Career Concepts—Concerns, Satisfaction and Wellbing

The three career concepts of focus in this chapter (career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing) have recently been given scholarly attention in industrial/organisational psychology, perhaps because the 21st century technological and economic developments in the world of work have created turbulence in the ways in which careers in organisations are exhausted (Arnold, 2011). In the last decade, most issues of investigation in industries and organisations have revolved around career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing (Bester, 2018; Potgieter, Coetzee & Ferreira, 2018; Yap, Holmes, Hanna, & Cukier, 2013).

Career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing have influenced research in industrial/organisational psychology in at least one way, and shaped human resources management practices. Many investigators have considered career wellbeing, career concerns and career satisfaction as determinants of organisational commitment, employee performance, productivity and turnover intention (Bester, 2018; Baek-Kyoo & Sunyoung, 2010; Nawaz & Pangil, 2016). The outcomes of, and recommendations from such scientific investigations have enhanced effectiveness in management and practices of human resources.

## 9.6 Theoretical Explanation of Career Concerns, Satisfaction and Wellbeing

A comprehensive theoretical explanation of the relationship between career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing is presented in this section, using Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943, 1954), Holland's (1985, 1997) person-vocation fit theory, and Lent, Brown and Hackett's (2002) social cognitive career theory.

9.6.1 Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Abraham Maslow, the renowned professor of psychology proposed his hierarchy of needs theory in his 1943 article titled "A theory of Human Motivation" (Huitt, 2007). The theory of need was developed to explain how human beings fulfil innate needs as a priority, culminating in self-actualisation.

The hierarchy of human needs, according to Maslow (1943), is in the form of a pyramid with the most important needs at the lowest end, and higher order needs at the top. This arrangement of needs indicates that persons' most elementary needs must be met before they develop the interest to reach advanced level needs. Figure. 9.1 below illustrates this hierarchy of needs in a pyramid format.
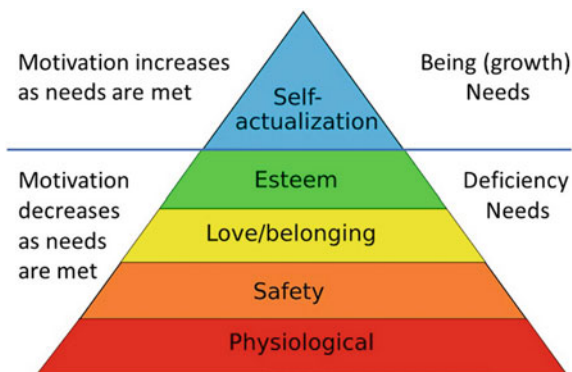
As illustrated in Fig. 9.1, the pyramid has five layers, with the four basic layers of comprising the d-needs (deficiency needs) according to Maslow, while the topmost level being the b-needs (being needs) (McLeod, 2018). The d-needs include esteem, belongingness and love, safety, and physiological needs. The b-needs on the other hand involve the desire for self-actualisation (McLeod, 2018). Maslow assumed that if the d-needs are unmet (physiological need excluded), there might not be any physical signs but the person will feel concerned and anxious. Hence, Maslow submitted that the fundamental level of needs must be settled before a person will intensely desire the secondary level needs.

Maslow (1943) believed that individuals are inspired to meet their needs and that certain needs take priority over others. Humans' most fundamental need is for physical survival and this is the first factor that determines human behaviour (Alio, 2017). Once the physical survival level of needs is satisfied, the next level up is what motivates human beings. The progression continues orderly until it reaches the b-needs (McLeod, 2018).

Examples of physiological needs are water, shelter, air, sleep, food, clothing, sex, warmth, and reproduction (Maslow, 1987). That of safety needs include freedom from fear, protection from elements, stability, security, and law. Examples of love and belongingness needs are the need for interpersonal relationships, family group, peer group and friendship group, while that of esteem needs include esteem for oneself (dignity, achievement, mastery, independence), and the desire for reputation or respect from others (e.g. status, prestige) (Maslow, 1987). Self-actualisation needs, on the other hand, include realising personal potential, self-fulfilment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences—a desire "to become everything one is capable of becoming" (Maslow, 1987, p. 64). The above presented hierarchy of needs theory, its assumptions and principles are applicable to the explanation of the phenomena of career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing.

In reference to the assumptions of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, a career person may experience dissatisfaction with their vocation if they encounter certain unresolved problems that frustrate the efforts of achieving the d-needs. A career

person who finds themself in the 'frustration-stagnation' situation, as explained in the preceding paragraphs, would nurture anxieties and worries over what lies ahead in the future in the chosen career (McLeod, 2018). Since the identified barriers to movement towards fulfilling b-needs remain, and the affected person can no longer grow in the career ladder, the associated experiences of career concerns and career dissatisfaction will therefore occur (McLeod, 2018). Consequently, the individual becomes unhappy about the chosen career.

Should one be in a situation as described above, feelings of despair and hopelessness about one's profession are inevitable. Career satisfaction and wellbeing are usually experienced by individuals who operate at the self-actualisation level of Maslow's pyramid. The reason is that there are no more aspirations or motivations for vocational growth since the person has attained the peak of their career (Huitt, 2007). The person is fulfilled career wise and then maintains their state of happiness found in the career. Thus, career satisfaction may determine career wellbeing.

9.6.2 Holland's Person-Vocation Fit Theory

The person-vocation fit theory was developed by Holland (1985, 1997) to guide career interest and environment assessment during career counselling and guidance sessions. Holland assumed that career interest is a manifestation of one's personality. He therefore categorised career interests into six groups, which are Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E), and Conventional (C). Holland suggested that if an individual's level of similarity with the six career personality and interest types is assessed, a three-letter code (e.g. SIA, RIA) may possibly be generated, which can be used to represent and summarise the individual's vocational interest. According to Holland, the first letter of the code is an individual's most important interest type that would probably play a key part in career choice and satisfaction. The second and third letters are minor interest themes, which would perhaps play a less significant part in the career choice process.

On the other hand, Holland (1985, 1997) further believed that career environments could also be conceptualised into similar groups. While in the process of making a career choice, individuals seek environments that would enable them to apply their competencies and skills, and encourage them to manifest their attitudes and ideals. Any career environment is influenced by the characteristics of the dominant individuals there, and the persons that are different from the dominant kinds will probably feel unfulfilled and dissatisfied. This could be related to career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing.

In application, the concept of "congruence" is used by Holland to refer to the status of person-environment relationships as determinants of career concerns, satisfaction and wellbeing. Thus, a high level of compatibility between an individual's personality, the interest types and the dominant career environmental types will probably yield career satisfaction and career wellbeing. On the other hand, a

low level of compatibility will probably yield career dissatisfaction and negatively affect career wellbeing (Leung, 2008).

9.6.3 Social Cognitive Career Theory

The social cognitive career theory was propounded by Lent, Brown and Hackett (2002), and anchored in Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1977, 1997), which assumed an equally impacting association between persons and the environment (Leung, 2008). Social cognitive career theory presents three sectional, yet inter-dependent, procedural models of career growth, which seek to describe the initiation of academic and career interest; the process of making educational and vocational choices; and educational, career performance and stability. The three sectional models have individually emphasised three important variables—personal goals, self-efficacy and outcome expectancies.

Self-efficacy is defined by Lent (2005) as "a dynamic set of beliefs that are linked to particular performance domains and activities" (p. 104). Self-efficacy expectancies impact the development of certain behaviour, and the maintenance of such behaviour in reaction to obstacles and problems. According to Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2002), outcome expectancies are individuals' beliefs concerning the outcomes of exhibiting a particular behaviour. Outcome expectancies comprise beliefs concerning external reward relating to exhibiting the aimed behaviour, self-regulated results, and consequences obtained from performing a task (Leung, 2008).

Generally, it is suggested that a person's outcome expectancies are shaped by learning experiences that form self-efficacy beliefs. While personal goal implies an individual's plan to achieve a certain outcome (Lent, 2005). Through setting of personal goals, people can endure in tasks, and maintain their behaviour longer, even when there is lack of concrete extrinsic rewards.

In Leung's (2008) view, the dynamic interactions between interest, self-efficacy, and outcome expectancies will result in the development of goals and intentions, which serve to maintain behaviour over time, creating the establishment of a steady form of interest in youth. This is applicable to the explanation of career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing. Personal goals, for instance, relate to career prospects, which ideally every career person would set in lieu of commencement of their vocational journey in life. Examples of such goals are "I would like to be a renowned medical doctor", "I would like to be first female professor in my field" or "I want to determine my career ladder". These goals set by individuals are based on the personal judgment of one's ability (self-efficacy) to meet the requirements for attaining the set goals, while the corresponding behaviours toward actualising the goals are sustained by the expected outcomes (outcome expectancies) in the form of rewards for realising the career goals. The reward may therefore be intrinsic (career fulfilment and self-actualisation) or extrinsic (higher socioeconomic status, recognition and increased wealth). However, if the environment presents unsurmountable

barriers to the actualisation of the set career goals, and the career person in question is overwhelmed, the consequential effect could possibly be vocational frustration (career concerns) and dissatisfaction. Hence, the outcome expectation of career wellbeing may be compromised.

9.7 Conclusion and Recommendation

The assumptions of theories presented in the chapter set a rational platform for postulating significant relationships among the three career concepts under review. Similarly, the reviewed literature in the chapter has conceptually demonstrated that there are relationships among career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing. Based on the agreement between the theoretical opinions gathered and the outcomes of literature reviewed, the chapter concludes that there are elements of correlation between career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing. Moreover, it is very important for stakeholders to note that the nature and direction of the assumed relationships between career concerns, career satisfaction and career wellbeing were not empirically investigated in the chapter. This therefore makes the conclusion formed subject to scientific evidence through empirical studies. In view of the above, it is recommended that scholars and practitioners in the fields of human resources management and industrial/organisational psychology should conduct scientific studies in this niche, and elicit findings that will be useful for effective management of human resources.

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