University of Southampton

FACULTY OF BUSINESS, LAW & ART

SOUTHAMPTON BUSINESS SCHOOL

AN EXPLORATORY SEQUENTIAL RESEARCH ON THE DYNAMICS OF INDIVIDUAL CAREER

by

Hang Thi Tran

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<u>**Abstract**</u>

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The field of Career Management is in critical need of integrative and interdisciplinary research into contemporary career phenomena. This exploratory sequential research responded to this call by exploring and testing novel features of individual career dynamics in the context of an emerging country in Asia. Driven by two new meta-frameworks of career research: the career ecosystem and the systematic theory framework, a mixed-method study was employed to address multiple aspects of the dynamics of individual careers at three levels: individual, institutional, and industrial. The findings from this research will help build a bridge between theories and concepts relating to careers and those used in other disciplines such as proactivity, positivity concepts, Job design theory, and Self-Determination theory.

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I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

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   Tran, H., Baruch, Y., & Bui, H. T. (2019). On the way to self-employment: the dynamics of career mobility. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1-25.

Signature   Date: 26/8/2019

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To my beloved ones, to my supervisors, to my supporters, to all the opportunities and challenges, to all the good and bad things that make me become who I am now.

GLOSSARY

Amotivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017)

The extent to which people are passive, ineffective, or without purpose with respect to any given set of potential actions.

Authenticity (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005)

Can I be myself in the midst of all of this and still be authentic?

Balance (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005)

If I make this career decision, can I balance all parts of my life well so that there is e a coherent whole?

Boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p.6)

There are six meanings of a boundaryless career

(1) Like the stereotypical Silicon Valley career, that move across the boundaries of separate employers;

(2) Like those of academics or carpenters, that draw validation – and marketability-from outside the present employer;

(3) Like those of real-estate agents, that are sustained by external networks or information;

(4) That break traditional organizational assumptions about hierarchy and career advancement;

(5) That involve an individual rejecting existing career opportunities for personal or family reasons; and

(6) That are based on the interpretation of the career actor, who may perceive a boundaryless future regardless of structural constraints.

Career (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989)

An evolving sequence of a person's work experience over time

Career ecosystem (Baruch, 2015; 2013; Baruch, Altman & Tung, 2016; Higgins, 2005)

A view of careers and labour markets as a dynamic system with interrelated participants.

Career success (Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999)

Career success is defined as ''the positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievements one accumulates as a result of work experiences"

Challenge (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005)

Will I be sufficiently challenged if I accept this career option?

Employability (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007, p.25)

The individual's ability to keep the job one has, or to get the job one desires.

Extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Represented by behaviors that are instrumental for some separable consequence such as an external reward or social approval, avoidance of punishment, or the attainment of a valued outcome.

Intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Represented by behaviors are those that are performed out of interest and for which the primary "reward" is the spontaneous feelings of effectance and enjoyment that accompany the behaviors

Job demands (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001)

Refers to those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs (e.g, exhaustion).

Job resources (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001)

Refers to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may do any of the following: (a) be functional in achieving work goals, (b) reduce job demands at the associated physiological and psychological costs; (c) stimulate personal growth and development.

Physical mobility (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006)

The transition across boundaries

Positivity (Luthans & Youssef, 2004)

Contains some basic capacities. Those that best meet the POB criteria of being positive, unique, measurable, developable, and performance related are self-efficacy/ confidence, hope, optimism, and resiliency.

Proactivity (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001).

Proactive individuals are purported to "select, create, and influence work situations that increase the likelihood of career success"

Protean career (Hall, 2004; 1996; 1976)

Draws on the motive of an individual to follow a particular career path; driven by values-driven and self-directed career moves.

Psychological mobility (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006)

The perception of the capacity to make transitions

Chapter 1: Introduction.

1.1 Overview

A career, defined as 'an evolving sequence of a person's work experience over time' (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989), has been considered an individual-centred phenomenon since the early work of Parsons (1909). Current integrated frameworks in career research, such as the career ecosystem (Baruch, 2015; Baruch, Altman & Tung, 2016; Baruch & Rousseau, 2018) and the system theory framework of career development (Patton & McMahon, 2006, 2014) place individuals at the heart of their model. Neither of these frameworks, however, advocate individual agency as the sole element of the career system. Even prominent career concepts that emphasise individual attributes such as Protean and boundaryless careers still admit the role of organisational and contextual determinants in an individual's career (Guan, Arthur, Khapova, Hall & Lord, 2018; Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007).

Entirely relying on an organisational or traditional career is considered inappropriate in today's business environment (Kato & Suzuki, 2006). However, pushing people to self-manage has also been criticised for its darker aspects (Zeitz, Blau & Fertig, 2009). Thus, it is necessary to consider both structure and agency, the dynamic relationships (Chudzikowski & Mayrhofer, 2011) of which yield an adequate understanding of careers. The complex interactions between these individual-organisational perspectives are enshrined in the career ecosystem (Baruch, 2015) and system theory framework of career development (Patton & McMahon, 2014); however, further empirical evidence is needed to bridge the gaps between theory and practice.

The dynamics of contemporary careers also call for interdisciplinary and multi-level research (Arnold & Cohen, 2008; Arthur, 2008; Chudzikowski & Mayrhofer, 2011; Khapova & Arthur, 2011). Moreover, complicated career phenomena face another challenge regarding methodological issues (Arthur, 2008; Chudzikowski & Mayrhofer, 2011; Hall, 2002). Finally, career scholars have also considered whether an Eastern context can question contemporary career

understandings that have largely emerged and developed in Western contexts (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007).

This thesis aimed to address these challenges by seeking answers to the primary research question: ***What are the characteristics and mechanisms of the dynamics of individual careers in Vietnam?*** Specific qualitative and quantitative aspects of this question were further addressed by additional qualitative questions, quantitative questions, and a triangulated question, as presented below:

Sub-questions for qualitative study:

- What are the most prominent individual career phenomena arising from the economy?
- How do these individual career phenomena interact and interconnect?
- Which career concepts and theories are best suited to explaining individual career phenomena?

Sub-questions for quantitative study:

- To what extent does the organisational environment affect individual career phenomena in manufacturing industries?
- To what extent do individual factors affect individual career phenomena in manufacturing industries?

Triangulation:
- Do the views of participants from different employment contexts in the exploratory (qualitative) study and participants from manufacturing industries in the explanatory (quantitative) study converge or diverge?

A single methodological approach may be inadequate in an underexplored context, especially in transitional and emerging markets that could possibly be home to hidden nuances (Kiessling & Harvey, 2005). Therefore, exploratory sequential research was carefully designed to address the research questions, responding to the call for greater variation in the methodologies applied to career research (Arthur, 2008; Khapova & Arthur, 2011; Chudzikowski & Mayrhofer, 2011).

Specifically, for exploratory purposes a qualitative method was employed. This was conducted in Vietnam's manufacturing industry. Following a pilot test, a quantitative research method,

comprising a survey with closed-ended questions, was used to compare, contrast, and describe interactions among different career elements. In combination, these two studies contribute to providing new and sound knowledge of the dynamics of individual careers in Vietnam, paving the way for future research, especially on Asian careers.

1.2   Research philosophy.

Well-designed research is built on a strong philosophical foundation (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2015). The philosophical worldview or paradigm includes three main assumptions that determine the ways in which researchers conduct their research and interpret findings to address research questions (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Saunders et al., 2015). The first assumption, ontology, relates to the nature of reality. At one extreme, an objectivist ontology argues that realities exist externally to social actors and all social actors experience the same solid and unchangeable realities. At the other extreme, a subjectivist ontology insists that realities are formed within and between individuals through social interaction and that these are shaped by cultural and historical norms. Thus, different people encounter different social phenomena. The ontological stance of the researchers also predicts the kind of reality they study (Saunders et al., 2015).

The second assumption, epistemology, concerns issues such as 'what makes acceptable knowledge?' and 'how do we gain knowledge of what we know?' (Saunders et al., 2015). An objective epistemology seeks to identify causal relationships, collecting observable and measurable data to make law-like generalisations. A subjective epistemology, on the other hand, involves discovering different opinions, the narratives obtained then reflecting the different social realities of different social actors (Saunders et al., 2015).

The third assumption, axiology, concerns the role played by researchers' and participants' values in the research process. While an objective axiology eliminates individual values when conducting research, subjective axiology emphasises the importance of individual values during data collection, analysis, and the interpretation process. Objective assumptions (ontology, epistemology, and axiology) form part of the positivist paradigm and contribute to the quantitative research tradition while subjective assumptions form part of the constructivist paradigm and contribute to the qualitative research tradition.

Unlike positivist and constructivist paradigms, pragmatists advocate that multiple realities may simultaneously exist, leading to different ways of interpreting the world (Saunders et al., 2015). They argue that neither a single 'real world' nor 'everyone has their unique interpretation of reality' is a realistic research orientation (Morgan, 2007). Instead, researchers should focus on both

consensus and conflict aspects of realities. In terms of epistemology and methodology, pragmatism states that conducting research is a back and forth process between different approaches to linking theory and data, and between specific findings and their more general implications, relying on both the subjectivity and objectivity of researchers (Morgan, 2007).

A quantitative research design often adopts the positivist worldview, follows a deductive approach, and employs experimental or survey research strategies. It aims to examine relationships between variables, deals with numeric data, and relies on probability sampling and statistical analysis techniques (Saunder et al., 2015). The quality of quantitative research depends on its internal and external validity (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). A significant criticism of quantitative research is that rapid social change and increasing diversification of the life world create new social contexts and perspectives. Research into such contexts, however, cannot start from existing theories and focus on hypothesis testing (Flick, 2009). Furthermore, because social relations are characterised as increasing individualisation, the logic of quantitative research has been challenged (Flick, 2009).

Qualitative research design, by contrast, usually takes the interpretive/constructivist worldview, follows an inductive approach, and adopts strategies such as action research, case study, ethnography, grounded theory, and narrative research (Saunder et al., 2015). The focus of qualitative research is on exploring the meanings constructed by participants and the relationships between these. Data collected for qualitative research normally takes a narrative form and is analysed based on thematic strategies such as coding, categorising and contextualising. Trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability are quality criteria for qualitative research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Qualitative research also has several drawbacks (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). For example, generalisation to other research settings is limited. Qualitative research is also time consuming and has lower credibility. It may also suffer from the personal biases of researchers. At the same time, quantitative predictions and hypothesis and theory testing are difficult to achieve.

Linking pragmatism with mixed method research, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) argued that the criticism of incommensurability between postpositivism and constructivism is invalid. One study may adopt both qualitative and quantitative methods if the research questions require this. Quantitative and qualitative methods are often discussed as a forced-choice dichotomy but their analytical techniques pursue common goals (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins, 2009). Ultimately, quantitative and qualitative research both use empirical data to find answers to research questions.

The simplest analytical technique, coding, in various forms such as inductive, deductive, abductive, interpretive, open, axial, and selective coding, can be applied to both textual or visual

and numeric data. Furthermore, raw data can be grouped using both thematic and exploratory factor analysis. Moreover, more advanced qualitative analytical techniques, by their very nature, include some quantitative elements and vice versa. For example, qualitative researchers have often reached theoretical saturation at some level of confidence or even certainty, both of which are quantitative techniques. Similarly, quantitative researchers have usually made subjective decisions when choosing the most suitable quantitative instruments for their analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009).

By including both qualitative and quantitative methods, a mixed method design somehow transcends the limitations of relying solely on one particular method (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). For example, mixed method research can tackle both exploratory and confirmatory aspects of research questions. The method also allows for divergent views and offers stronger inferences as it applies both inductive and deductive approaches, qualitative and quantitative sampling, data collection and analysis. A mixed-method research design can be classified as concurrent (or parallel) triangulation or concurrent (or parallel) embedded. Sequential explanatory, sequential exploratory, and sequential multi- phase research can be applied. The quality of mixed method research depends on inference quality and transferability (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

To be regarded as an established discipline, the career field requires integrative and interdisciplinary research (Arthur, 2008; Chudzikowski & Mayrhofer, 2011; Khapova & Arthur, 2011; McMahon & Patton, 2018; Patton & McMahon, 2014). Moreover, the global contexts of career studies are also in demand (Patton & McMahon, 2014). These concerns were addressed in this mixed-method research by searching for and testing integrative and interdisciplinary understanding of the dynamics of individual careers in an emerging economy. The rationale for the applicability of a mixed-method approach in the present research lay in the congruence between pragmatist viewpoints and career viewpoints. In particular, the ontological assumption of the pragmatist paradigm was suitable for identifying the similarities and differences among the career phenomena of different employment groups (Zeitz et al., 2009)

Furthermore, the interdependence, interaction, and interconnectedness between individual and environmental factors (Baruch, 2015) makes it more critical to explore general causal effects as well as the distinctive feelings of individuals, fitting the epistemological assumption of pragmatists. Additionally, the personal values of participants are important in career studies as different participants attach different values to their career. This attachment may influence the way people interpret environmental factors (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Thus, a consideration of values is crucial for obtaining an appropriate understanding of individual careers. In addition, career

researchers may demonstrate both their subjectivity and objectivity, aligning with the axiological assumption of pragmatist worldviews.

The exploratory qualitative study aimed to explore the relevant framework of individual career dynamics in a variety of organisations and industries in Vietnam. The explanatory quantitative study addressed emerging relationships in different organisations operating in manufacturing industries. A comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of individual careers in Vietnam was thus generated by integrating both qualitative and quantitative findings.

1.3   Research design

Exploratory sequential research is a mixed method that comprises three main stages: qualitative data collection and analysis, transferring qualitative findings to testable hypotheses, and testing the hypotheses using a quantitative approach (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This type of research aligned well with the intention to thoroughly explore the dynamics of individual careers based on a small sample and identify the level of generalisation of qualitative results to a larger sample in manufacturing industries. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, respectively: both were culturally sensitive and setting-focused. Purposive sampling and probability sampling were followed in the qualitative and quantitative studies, respectively (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015).

Taking a constructivist viewpoint, the qualitative research emphasises subjective knowledge, appreciates multiple realities, and prioritises deep understanding. The knowledge grounded in participants' opinions was combined with current literature to set a theoretical framework for the quantitative study. The philosophical assumptions then changed to post-positivist views during the quantitative research stage which concentrated on objective knowledge, looked for a singular reality, and explored similarities among participants. Potential contradictions, tensions, and oppositions between the two opposing paradigms arose during the interpretation of qualitative and quantitative findings, contributing new insights into the dynamics of individual careers (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Creswell and Clark's (2017) analytical procedure was followed in this research. First, qualitative data was analysed to identify relevant themes and codes emerging from the research setting. Second, the purpose and scope of quantitative research was identified, and quantitative tools were developed. Third, linkages between qualitative themes and codes and quantitative features were established. Fourth, quantifiable hypotheses were examined using a small-scale pilot test. Fifth, a large-scale survey was implemented. Finally, all qualitative and quantitative findings

were integrated, and new knowledge was generated. This systematic process therefore allowed for contradictions and similarities among career perspectives (Arthur, 2008).

Summaries of the research process are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1. The first column in Table 1 details the overall and specific research questions of this study. The second column reveals the corresponding methods used to address the questions. First, mixed method research based on the pragmatist paradigm; exploring sequential design, qualitative and quantitative data collection, and the mixed method analysis procedure, was applied to search for valid and reliable answers to the overall research question. Second, the qualitative research method based on the constructivist paradigm used both semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis to answer the qualitative research questions. Third, the quantitative research method based on the positivist paradigm used a survey method, questionnaires, confirmatory factor analysis, and mediation test to answer the quantitative research questions. Finally, the qualitative data was quantified, quantitative hypotheses based on qualitative findings were developed, and the qualitative and quantitative results were compared and contrasted for the purpose of triangulation.

Several steps were followed to implement the mixed method design (Figure 1). The first essential step involved devising a good design for the exploratory qualitative study. The qualitative research process involved pilot interviews, 1st and 2nd rounds of interviews, and analysing and interpreting interview data. The second major step involved developing quantitative hypotheses and designing the quantitative study. The quantitative research procedure involved a pilot test, 1st and 2nd surveys, and analysing and interpreting survey data. The final key step in the mixed method research was to triangulate qualitative and quantitative findings to build a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of individual careers.

Table 1: Methodological approaches to answering research questions

Question	Method
Overall research question: What are the characteristics and mechanisms of the dynamics of individual careers in Vietnam?	**Overall research method:** ● Pragmatist worldview ● Exploratory sequential research ● Qualitative and quantitative data collection ● Creswell and Clark's (2017) mixed method analytical procedure.
Qualitative research questions: ● What are the most prominent individual career phenomena arising from the economy? ● How do these individual career phenomena interact and interconnect with each other? ● Which career concepts and theories are most suitable for explaining the above individual career phenomena?	**Qualitative research method:** ● Constructionist worldview ● Semi-structured interviews ● Saldana's (2015) coding procedure.
Quantitative research questions: ● To what extent does the organisational environment affect individual career phenomena in manufacturing industries? ● To what extent do individual factors affect individual career phenomena in manufacturing industries?	**Quantitative research method:** ● Positivist worldview ● Survey method ● Questionnaires ● Confirmatory factor analysis and mediation test with PROCESS
Triangulation question: ● Do the views of participants from different employment contexts in the 1st study and of participants from manufacturing industries in the 2nd study converge or diverge?	**Triangulation method:** ● Quantifying qualitative data technique ● Quantitative hypotheses developed from qualitative findings and relevant literature ● Comparing and contrasting qualitative and quantitative results.

Figure 1: Steps in the present research process

Mixed method research design → Qualitative research design → Pilot interview → 1st stage of interview → 2nd stage of interview → Analysis, finding & interpretation → Quantitative research design and hypotheses → Pilot survey → 1st survey → 2nd survey → Analysis, finding & interpretation → Mixed method triangulation
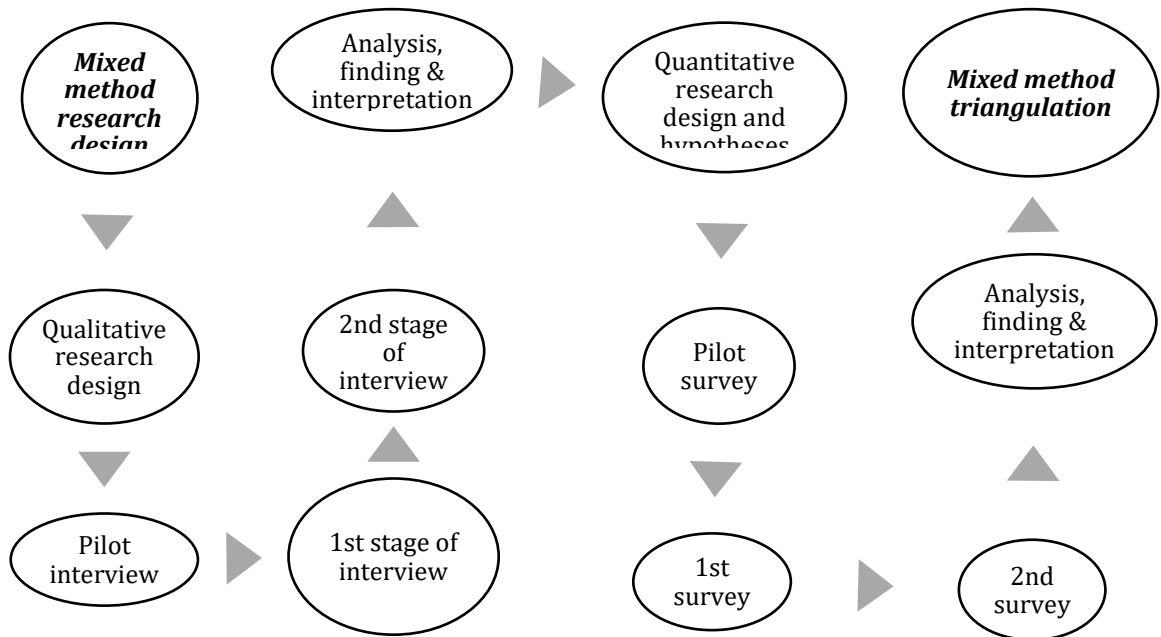
The thesis continues with a qualitative chapter '*In search of a profound understanding of individual careers*' that discusses critical issues in contemporary career literature that were addressed in the present research. This is followed by a quantitative chapter '*In test on fresh perspectives of individual career*' that reviews relevant theoretical explanations for key qualitative findings and develops and examines several essential hypotheses in manufacturing industries. Finally, the qualitative and quantitative findings are integrated and triangulated in the '*Discussion and Conclusion*' chapter, fulfilling the aims of the present mixed-method research.

Chapter 2: In search of a profound understanding of individual careers

The first (qualitative) study explored how scholars explained individual career paths, what ordinary people thought of their careers, and how to connect the two. The ultimate aim of the study was to develop a profound understanding of individual career dynamics, bridging the gap between theoretical and natural phenomena. I firstly outline the evolution of individual career disciplines over time and explain the current challenges of career research. This led to the three critical research questions that needed to be considered.

2.1 Theoretical foundations

2.1.1 In search of profound career theories

The development of career field theory dates back to Parsons' (1909) model of career choice, comprising self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, and perceived relationships between self and occupation (Brown, 2002a; Patton & McMahon, 2014). Because of its short history, the career discipline is still in a developmental stage. The considerable expansion of career concepts emphasises the need for adequate explanation from well-founded theories (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

Since the early work of Parsons (1909), a number of career theories have emerged. Some of the very early theories were trait and factor theory, and person-environment fit theory, emphasising the individual and organisational influences of careers. These were followed by theories that highlight the content or process of career development. Prominent from the 1980s to the early 1990s were theories addressing both content and process. From the late 1990s, constructivist career theories and wider explanations of career development attracted the attention of career scholars.

Given that career theories should correspond to the ever-changing career context, Patton and McMahon (1999, 2006, 2014) introduced their System Theory Framework of career studies. Based on the root of contextualism metaphor, this framework aims to reflect the recursiveness, ongoing relationships, and changes among parts of the system. In a similar effort to endow the career field with features such as flexibility and adaptability, Baruch and associates (Baruch, 2015; Baruch, Altman & Tung, 2016; Baruch & Rousseau, 2018), based on the ecosystem metaphor, proposed a career ecosystem framework. A career ecosystem considers the interdependence, interrelations, and interconnectedness among different career actors that contribute to the

equilibrium of the entire career ecosystem. A brief critical overview of these theories will be given in the following paragraphs.

2.1.1.1   *Theory of content*

According to Patton and McMahon (2014), internal and external forces of career development are considered the content of such development. Theory of content primarily focuses on individual determinants of career development while contextual influences are rarely mentioned (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Prominent theories include Trait and factor theory (Holland, 1973, 1997; Parsons, 1909), the psychodynamic model of Bordin (1990), the values-based theory of Brown (2002a), the theory of work adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Dawis, 1996, 2002, 2005), and the five factor theory (McCrae & John, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 2008).

Scholars in this school of thought advocate personality or interest and values as important elements of self-knowledge that affect decision-making processes. However, the operation of these elements is explained differently by theorists in this area. For example, personality is argued to be more static by Holland than by Bordin. The effects of each of these determinants are often posited separately while little effort has been made to explore the linkages among these predictors. Fortunately, these separate efforts sometimes yield a complementary interpretation. For instance, satisfaction is considered an outcome of individual values in the workplace by Dawis and colleagues while Holland argued that satisfaction takes place when congruence between individuals and organisations is achieved.

Another influential force, although not a crucial one, in the theory of content is the work environment. Parsons referred to the work environment as, 'the conditions of efficiency and success'. Holland defined the work environment according to the characteristics of people working in such an environment. By contrast, Dawis and Lofquist distinguished between the characteristics of these individuals and their organisations. Consequently, the recursiveness and changing nature of individual and contextual influences are mentioned only modestly. In fact, the person-environment fit model was explained by these scholars as an adjustment process that involves interactions between workers and their environment, resulting in satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) and satisfactoriness (or unsatisfactoriness). The theory of work adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984) is consistent with Parsons' (1909) conceptualisation of congruence between individuals and jobs. Congruence is a motivator for both employees and their institutions. It is a dynamic process involving corresponding development and adaptation between individuals and the environment.

The great contribution made by the theory of content to career literature cannot be denied. However, the theory may be subject to several criticisms, for example it lacks any systematic view

of contextual factors. In addition, the interactions between individual characteristics are acknowledged without any clear explanation. A significant amount of subsequent work has built on the theory of content, especially Holland's theory. However, Holland's work, together with the entire school of research, has made no significant advances, development, or restatements on the subject (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

2.1.1.2 *Theory of process*

The process element of career development relates to a series of stages in which individuals interact with the environment and change over time. Typical theories that emphasise the process of career development are the theories of Ginzberg and his colleagues (1951), Ginzberg (1972, 1984), Super (1990, 1994), Gottfredson (2005), Brown (2002b), and Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996), the latter of which covered both content and process elements although the emphasis was on developmental states.

The main interest of the theory of process is the development of self-concept and behaviours over time; these are driven by self and/or contextual factors. Self-concept affects career development by raising awareness of life roles and role salience (Super, 1992; Savickas, 2013). The self-concept is itself generated from different variables such as the individual as actor, as agent, and as author of the concept (Savickas, 2013), or a range of contextual determinants (Super, 1990). The development of the self-concept is attached to each stage of one's lifespan (Super, 1990; Savickas, 2002, 2005, 2013). In particular, developmental stages proposed by the theory of process are not characterised by forward movement, but by maxi and mini-cycles and recycling through stages (Super, 1992; Savickas, 2005). While Super argued that these stages occur within individuals, Savickas conceived these stages as outcomes of the interaction between self and contextual influences.

Along with developmental stages are the vocational development tasks undertaken during an individual's lifetime career. These tasks are mainly concerned with making better occupational decisions corresponding to new self and occupational knowledge as one matures. Put simply, Super (1992) explained these tasks as narrowing vocational options. Specifically, Gottfredson (2005) distinguished between two patterns of ruling career options: circumscription (ruling out some occupational options based on gender and social class factors) and compromise (ruling out some occupational options based on working conditions, education, and personal values).

The theory of process offers forward thinking regarding career development over a lifespan. Contextual variables are also mentioned, although they are not comprehensively accounted for (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

2.1.1.3 Theory of content and process and other explanations

Later theories address both the content and process of career development by capturing the characteristics of individuals and context, and the interactions between these. The main approaches in this tradition consist of social learning approaches such as Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, happenstance learning theory (Krumboltz, 2011; Krumboltz, Foley & Cotter, 2013), the social cognitive perspective (Lent, 2005; Lent & Brown, 2002); and the cognitive information processing approach (Reardon, Lenz, Sampson, & Peterson, 2011). Context based approaches, such as the developmental-contextual approach (Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenberg, 1986), and the contextual approach (Young, Domene & Valach, 2014) also contribute to this research area.

As its name suggests, the theory of content and process pays equal attention to the content as well as the process of career development (Patton & McMahon, 2014). This branch of career theory accounts for intrapersonal influences such as ability, aptitudes, interests, age, skills, values, work knowledge, personality, and self-concept. Less attention is given to gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, beliefs, health, and disability. Compared to previous formulations of career theory, the theory of content and process devotes more effort to explaining the effects of contextual factors. For example, social influences are classified as family, peers, community, education, institutions, and the workplace. Environmental-societal influences are those pertaining to politics, history, the employment market, geography, and socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the theory highlights the process of career development by reflecting the interaction between individual and environmental factors, changes over time, and the role of chance (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

Other issues relating to individual career patterns that merit further investigation by career scholars include the career development of women, racial and ethnic groups, the LGBT community, children, and adolescents, and issues relating to social justice, such as social class, and disability (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

2.1.1.4 Integrative understanding of the individual career

The above-mentioned schools of career research, however, have been criticised for their narrow focus and for causing the fragmentation and closure of the field (Dany, 2014; McMahon & Patton, 2018). This has led to calls for an integrative approach to career research, one that encompasses a wide variety of career experiences and provides alternative explanations of career dynamics, marked by individual agency and multi-level contextual factors (Dany, 2014). In the next

few paragraphs, two prevalent frameworks that provide integrative approaches to career research are discussed.

A systems theory framework of career development

In light of the contextualism metaphor, Patton and McMahon (2006, 2014) developed a system theory framework (STF) of career development that went beyond discipline boundaries to provide an overarching overview of the content and process of career development. STF is positioned as a metatheoretical structure, incorporating different theories to form a macro picture of career development. In addition, STF also searches for relevant interpretations of career phenomena from other disciplines such as economics and sociology (McMahon & Patton, 2018). In Figure 2, relationships, patterns, and the likelihood of recursive and changing interactions among individual career-related variables are displayed.

The individual career is the central focus of STF and is embedded in a contextual system consisting of the social system and the environmental-societal system. Moreover, the processes influencing individual career development include the recursive relationships between individuals and their environment, changes happening over time, and chance. Popular elements of individual systems within STF have been highlighted in precursor theories, such as personality, values, age, work knowledge, and spiritual beliefs. In addition, features less frequently focused upon, such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ethnic groups, disability, and health, are also mentioned.

According to previous studies, the social system of STF consists of influences as diverse as peers, family, media, community groups, the workplace, and educational institutions (McMahon & Patton, 2018; Patton & McMahon, 1996, 2006, 2014). Similarly, the environmental-societal system of STF covers elements mentioned in existing theory, including political decisions, historical trends, globalisation, socioeconomic status, employment markets, and geographical location. Each of these systems is open and permeable to influence. Therefore, the recursiveness of influences among these systems is characterised as non-linear, causal, mutual, multidirectional, and changing over time. Moreover, the role of unpredictable chance in career development should also be addressed, because chance can affect any part of the whole system and interrupt the connection and relationships between elements (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

Figure 2 System theory framework of career development, adapted from Patton and McMahon (1999)
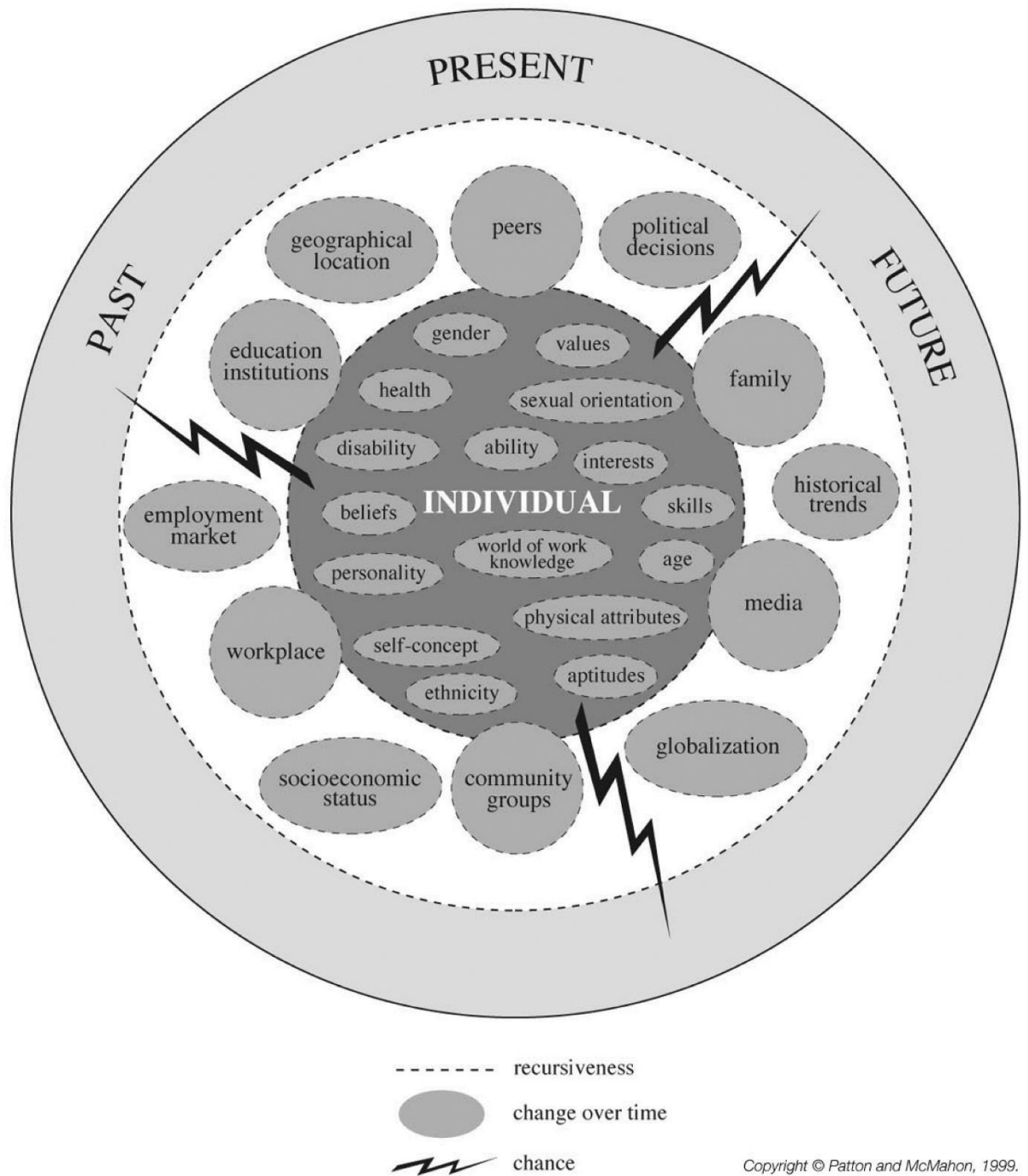
Career ecosystem theory

Aiming to provide a holistic and integrative landscape of career development, Baruch (2015) developed a career ecosystem framework. Focusing on 'overall improvement' and 'socio-economic balance', he advocated the idea of a career ecosystem in which career actors coexist and interact in the labour market environment to achieve equilibrium and stability. Three main career actors within the career ecosystem are individuals, organisations, and society. Each of these actors has certain characteristics, marking the boundaries of the system. In fact, a career boundary is a function of the economy, culture, politics, legal system, sectors, organisational career systems, and individual competence, needs, values, and attitudes. Furthermore, career actors also commit to a wide range of career practices to promote their own interests and contribute to push-pull factors within the system, leading to an equilibrium state (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Main actors within the career ecosystem, adapted from Baruch, 2004
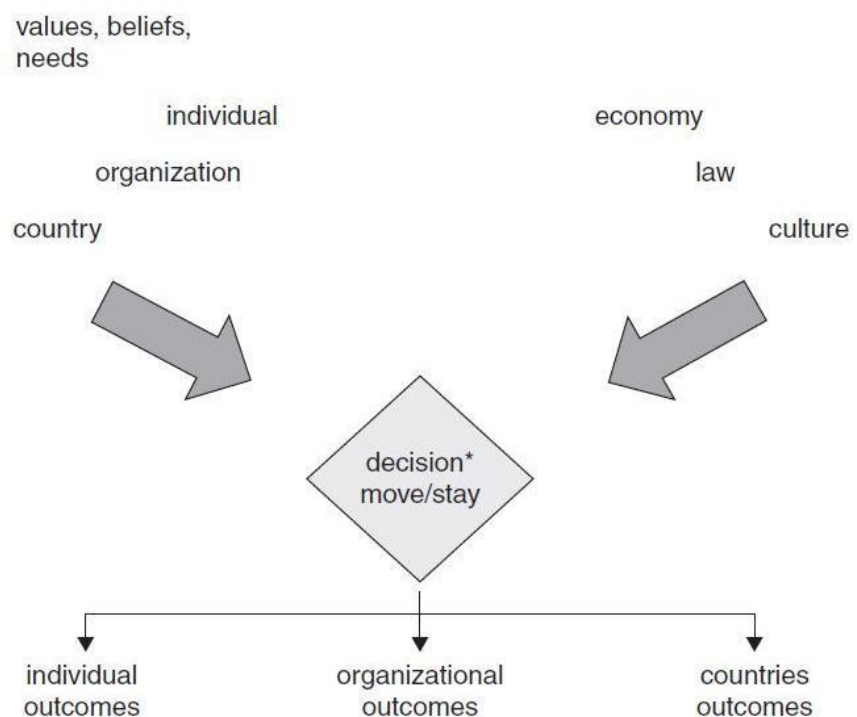
Note: * Can be taken in each level – usually the person.

Individual actors, the centre of the career ecosystem, make their own career choices based on personal characteristics and values (Baruch, 2015). These characteristics and values are formed within education, home, community, or religious environments. For example, people in individualistic cultures may appreciate individual career achievement more than people in collectivist cultures. Three main scenarios of an individual career can be described as follows. At

one extreme, there are people who choose to run their own business or become self-employed. At the other extreme, there are people who pay little interest to managing their career. In the middle are people who want to develop their career in their organisations. Organisations, hence, can be career systems for a majority of people (Baruch, 2015).

Figure 4: Career actors as sources of dynamics within a career ecosystem, adapted from Baruch, 2015

Individual	Organization	Society
What they bring to the system		
Needs, traits,	Organizational culture	Culture, values,
	Organizational resources	
values, attitudes,	Organizational structure	education, legislation,
human capital		professional associations
What they do		
Plan, learn, train, negotiate,	Plan, support, inspire, monitor	Educate, legislate, regulate, set
network	Train, negotiate	norms
Perform		
Progress		

The career ecosystem is continuously operated on by dual processes: bottom-up and top-down (Baruch & Rousseau, 2018). From the bottom-up, individuals in their pursuit of goals within the ecosystem will develop, establish, modify, and create career structures. From the top-down, government and official institutions will impose regulations, laws, and offer support to individuals within the system. Balancing the top-down and bottom-up forces will contribute to the sustainability of the ecosystem (Baruch & Rousseau, 2018).

The success of the career ecosystem depends on interactions among career actors in which push and pull factors play an important role (figure 4). For instance, remuneration, person-organisation fit, and organisational reputation are pull factors that attract people to organisation(s). Conversely, people may psychologically or physically leave the organisation(s) because of push factors, including different types of alienation. The labour market can also impose pull or push factors on the career ecosystem via the flourishing of new types of organisations, employment, and so on. In the age of the contemporary career, successful criteria for individuals are multi-skilling, high employability, job enrichment, self-management, and entrepreneurship, and enhancing the quality of work and life. Successful organisational career systems are characterised by empowerment, investing in human capital, flexibility, new career paths, and employment arrangements (Baruch, 2015).

Inspired by the metaphorical use of the term 'ecosystem' in ecology studies, Baruch (2015) explained the career ecosystem in parallel with the content and process perspectives of STF. In fact, the main actors in the career ecosystem, individuals, organisations, and national or society level elements, correspond to the content element of STF (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Boundaries between sub-systems within the career ecosystem become blurred and to some extent disappear (Baruch, 2015). The dynamic of a career ecosystem is explained by the interconnectedness, interactions, and interdependencies among career actors that result from different push and pull forces (Baruch, 2015). The process dimension of STF is expressed as the constant flow of human capital, driven by both push and pull factors (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

While STF inherits the work of classic career development theories (Patton & McMahon, 2014), the career ecosystem is built on contemporary and emerging career models such as the Protean and Boundaryless career (Baruch, 2015). The individual career is a central element of the career ecosystem, and career mobility is a crucial phenomenon within the framework. Different push and pull forces, imposed by career actors, will result in equilibrium and overall improvement within the career ecosystem (Baruch, 2015).

Although the STF and career ecosystem theory have different origins, they share many things in common and may complement each other. For example, the career ecosystem theory may add contemporary thinking on career equilibrium and an overall improvement in outlook to STF. In return, STF may connect historical views on traditional career research with new career ecosystem thinking.

Regardless of the potential contribution of the integrative approach to the advancement of the career discipline, these integrative frameworks are complex and challenging and therefore further attestation in a different, complex, and dynamic context may be needed (McMahon & Patton, 2018).

2.1.1.5 Interdisciplinary view of a career

The interdisciplinary nature of career research is defined by its multiple traditions, the closest of which are psychology, sociology, education, and management (Arthur, 2008; Chudzikowski & Mayrhofer, 2011; Khapova & Arthur, 2011). In particular, Khapova and Arthur (2011) argued that an individual's career is significantly different from that of others as a result of the dynamics of his or her circumstances. Hence, an 'exceptional-but-real' understanding of the contemporary career is urgently required, based not on one particular research tradition but on interdisciplinary efforts; not by a one-level focus but through a multi-level approach (Arthur, 2008; Khapova & Arthur, 2011).

However, the criteria of interdisciplinary research have not been consistently established by career scholars. For example, Arthur (2008) advocated that by either integrating new evidence from another discipline to an existing one or by engaging in interdisciplinary work, scholars can demonstrate interdisciplinary communication. More comprehensively, Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer (2011) proposed five touchstones of interdisciplinary career studies: addressing contextual and multi-level issues and integrating views from different disciplines, balancing structure and agency factors, reflecting internal and external boundaries of individual careers, taking into account the dynamic perspective of careers, and contributing to the diversity of methodology and methods in career research. Such argumentation, unfortunately, is subject to empirical flaws (Dany, 2014).

2.1.2 In search of profound career concepts

Another concern related to the growth of career research as a field is to identify substantial career concepts that stand the test of time (Baruch, Szűcs & Gunz, 2015). Recently, different review methods and techniques have been introduced by career scholars (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017; Baruch et al., 2015; Lee, Felps & Baruch, 2014). Common among the findings of these current reviews is that career success, employability, and Protean and boundaryless careers are prominent terminologies in a contemporary career context (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017; Baruch et al., 2015), as will briefly be discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.1.2.1 Career success

The term, 'career success' has been of great concern to career scholars since the early beginnings of this discipline (Hughes, 1958; Parson, 1909). It has traditionally been expressed as the accomplishment of goals that are valued by individuals themselves rather than by others (Mirvis & Hall, 1994). More recently, career scholars have defined career success as gaining positive work and psychological outcomes from the accumulated experiences of individuals (Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001). Today, the main interest of career scholars lies in the conceptualisation and operation of a career embedded in a dynamic context (Dries, 2011; Mayrhofer, Meyer, Schiffinger & Schmidt, 2008).

Career success is best understood when conceived within the bigger picture of agencies and structural and contextual factors (Dries, Pepermans & Carlier, 2008). For example, during the era of the agricultural economy, physical existence, security, hard-work, and ethics were considered elements of career success (Savickas, 2000). In the age of the industrial economy, objective factors such as income, position, and status were common criteria for career success (Heslin, 2005). In the

modern knowledge economy, values of self-expression are considered important career success indicators (Pettersson, 2003). Hence, considerable attention has been paid to subjective careers in the current turbulent environment (Ng & Fedman, 2014). However, the comparative importance of self-expression vs survival values differs from country to country (Inglehart, 2008).

Career success is most commonly classified as objective vs subjective success (Hughes, 1958). Objective career success refers to confirmable career outcomes such as salary, promotion, and salary growth (Hall, 2002). However, these objective criteria do not take into consideration factors such as students' academic performance, creativity and patients' recovery – the main determinants of career success among teachers, designers, and doctors, respectively (Heslin, 2005). A broader view of career success advocated by Arthur, Khapova and Wilderom (2005) is that of an external perspective that delineates more or less tangible indicators of an individual's career situation. This provides a deeper understanding of objective career success in the contemporary career context. In some cases, objective career success may lead to subjective career success (Heslin, 2005). The main advantages of measuring career success based on objective criteria are its availability, minimisation of self-response biases, and the fact they are mentioned by many people (Heslin, 2005). Objective success, however, suffers from several drawbacks. Firstly, it does not address national and occupational variance; it may therefore attract potentially misleading interpretations in different contexts (Heslin, 2005). Moreover, objective career success may exert counter-productive effects on careerists as individuals (Hall, 2002) while failing to reflect institutional tendencies such as organisational delayering, downsizing, and outsourcing (Hall, 2002). Finally, objective career success excludes subjective components of work outcomes such as work-life balance, meaning and purpose at work. and degree of contribution (Heslin, 2005).

An alternative approach, supplementary to objective career success, is subjective career success (Heslin, 2005). Subjective career success relates to individuals' reactions to their career experiences across a broad timeframe (Heslin, 2005). In the modern work environment, subjective career success has become increasingly crucial as careerists prefer to actively create their own career success through heterogeneous and unique career paths (Colakoglu, 2011Da).

Job satisfaction and career satisfaction are widely used as indicators of career success (Heslin, 2005). However, these indicators suffer from certain shortcomings. For example, job satisfaction has been criticised for failing to fully reflect the nature of career success while career satisfaction does not address the role of contextual and inferential aspects of career success (Heslin, 2005). Furthermore, career success may have a different meaning to employees vs their supervisors, to full-time vs part-time workers, or to ordinary staff vs executive members. To thoroughly understand subjective career success, the adoption of a qualitative method to learn

what different people in different contexts consider to be subjective career success is recommended (Heslin, 2005).

While objective career success relates to common social interpretations, subjective career success refers to the interpretations of individuals (Arthur et al., 2005). The independence and interdependence between subjective and objective career success, however, is not acknowledged by career scholars (Arthur et al., 2005). Subjective and objective career success used to be considered mutually exclusive due to the trade-offs between work and non-work activities (Korman & Korman, 1980). However, scholars who believe that looking at both sides will provide a deeper insight into career success now advocate the interdependence and inseparability of subjective and objective career success (Arthur et al., 2005). Unfortunately, the one-way or two-way relationships between objective and subjective career success, together with the strength of such relationships, have only been partially examined in the literature (Arthur et al., 2005).

Career success scholars are also concerned with the validity and reliability of career success measurement (Heslin, 2005). Objective success indicators such as salary, salary growth, and promotions, although preferable in terms of standardisation, availability, and freedom from self-reported biases, do not cover all that people want from their careers (Heslin, 2005). Subjective career advocators tackle this issue by opening three avenues for success measurement: focusing on what employees want, taking context into account, and applying qualitative methods. Other work in this topic introduces self and other-referent career success as a more comprehensive conceptualisation of the phenomena (Heslin, 2005).

2.1.2.2   *Employability*

Initial concern about employability was expressed in terms of employment issues relating to employable and unemployable groups at the beginning of the 20th Century (Gazier, 1998). Government had long been the main controller of employability until organisational approaches became popular in the 1980s (Gazier, 1998). The role of individuals has been emphasised since the 1990s and remains dominant in the current turbulent environment (Rothwell, Herbert & Rothwell, 2008).

Despite its long research tradition (Feintuch, 1955), defining employability has been problematic due to its complicated meanings and perceptions (Van der Klink et al.,2016). Employability heavily depends on its embedded context, such as country, time, and economic conditions (Williams, Dodd, Steele & Randall, 2016). However, there is a general consensus in employability research that it can be studied on three levels: societies, institutions and individuals (Guilbert, Bernaud, Gouvernet & Rossier, 2016; Williams et al., 2016). Although many previous

studies have focused on particular aspects of employability, few have been dedicated to an integrated understanding of the concept (see Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006, for an exception).

Adopting a systematic view, Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) defined employability as the likelihood of a person accessing a suitable job or remaining employed, which depends on the interaction between individual, organisational, and environmental factors. However, further empirical support for this integrated model is needed. Appreciating the importance of a precise operationalisation of employability (Guilbert et al*.,* 2016), Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) advocated a five-dimensional framework of employability, paving the way for a relevant form of measurement. The five dimensions were occupational expertise, anticipation and optimisation, personal flexibility, corporate sense, and balance.

Described as a prerequisite for positive career outcomes, occupational expertise is believed to have increased importance in the current knowledge economy (Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Van der Heijden and Bakker, 2011). Anticipating future career scenarios and optimising personal preferences and market development is another crucial element of employability (Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006; Van der Heijden and Bakker, 2011). Personal flexibility in the face of numerous organisational and environmental changes and their side effects also needs to be taken into consideration to understand employability (Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Van der Heijden and Bakker, 2011). Moreover, demonstrating a high level of corporate sense such as knowledge, emotions, experience, responsibilities, and identity sharing is one way to achieve high employability (Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Van der Heijden & Bakker, 2011). Finally, balancing employees' interests, contributions, and benefits with those of employers is also critical for employability (Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Van der Heijden & Bakker, 2011).

In accordance with this model, Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) developed an employability measurement tool consisting of 47 items, including 15 occupational expertise items, eight anticipation and optimisation items, eight personal flexibility items, seven corporate sense items, and nine balance items. Other popular employability scales are the 16-item perceived employability scale devised by Rothwell et al., (2008), De Cuyper and De Witte's (2010) four-item personal flexibility scale, and Rothwell and Arnold's (2007) seven-item external employability scale.

2.1.2.3 *Boundaryless career*

Boundaryless careers were originally advocated by Arthur and Rousseau (1996) as career management practices that are contrary to organisational careers and comprise the following behaviours: working for different organisations, enhancing external employability, social networking, not following traditional career paths, changing jobs, and developing a boundaryless

career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). The organisation – boundaryless career dichotomy has, however, been criticised for simplifying the complex relationships between organisations and individuals, and between enablement and constraints (Arnold & Cohen, 2008).

Career boundaries, according to Arthur and Rousseau (1996), become permeable within and outside organisations. However, other scholars have argued that such boundaries cannot be removed and careers do not exist without them (Gubler, Arnold & Coombs, 2014; Inkson, Gunz, Ganesh & Roper, 2012; Rodrigues, Guest & Budjanovcanin, 2016). Hence, it is more accurate to refer to the boundary-crossing career rather than the boundaryless career (Rodrigues et al., 2016). Moreover, the original definition of a boundaryless career considers organisational boundaries to be the principal boundaries of individual careers (Jones, 2010). However, this does not reflect the significant effects of economic, social, and cultural contexts on employability and career development (Inkson, 2006; Inkson et al., 2012). Indeed, these kinds of boundaries not only constrain the development process of individual careers, they also enable it (Gubler et al., 2014). Thus, understanding these boundaries as well as individuals' readiness to cross them is crucial (Gubler et al., 2014).

Initial claims associated with the boundaryless career predict that it will become a widespread and prominent career model (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Powell, 2001) and that workers will take advantage of the benefits it offers in the context of outsourcing, downsizing, and the temporary workforce (Powell, 2001). People are able to cross boundaries because they have career capital in the form of values, identity, skills, experience, networks, and reputations, and liberation from organisational career structures (Inkson, 2006). The popularity of the boundaryless career has been demonstrated in the literature (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Rodrigues & Guest, 2010).

Critical reasoning and practical evidence, unfortunately, do not support or even challenge the above assumptions regarding the factors related to a boundaryless career (Inkson et al., 2012; Lazarova & Taylor, 2009; Zeitz et al., 2009). For example, although many workers (professional, technical, and managerial groups) voluntarily experience boundaryless work, the majority (lower-skilled workers, women and minorities) do not but are pushed into boundaryless careers (Zeitz et al., 2009). Commentators therefore emphasise the need for a balanced view of careers and the investigation of different forms of career to better understand both similarities and variations within and among different non-standard work groups (Zeitz et al., 2009, Inkson et al., 2012). It should also be noted that boundaryless careers are costly for both employers and employees (Zeitz et al., 2009), illustrating the fact that job security is still favoured by most workers and that most occurrences of mobility are involuntary (Zeitz et al., 2009). These costs, fortunately, may be reduced

when employers provide adequate support for their employees to pursue their intended careers (Zeitz et al., 2009).

Significant efforts have been made to transfer the boundaryless career as a metaphor (Inkson, 2006; Inkson et al., 2012; Rodrigues et al., 2016) to a measurable concept for practical research (Briscoe, Hall & DeMuth, 2006). For instance, the boundaryless career concept has been operationalised in terms of physical and psychological mobility (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Physical mobility, which dominates boundaryless career research, relates to actual inter- and intra- organisational boundary-crossing. Psychological mobility, on the other hand, refers to individual preferences for working across organisational boundaries by networking with people inside and outside organisations (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Combining these two dimensions, Sullivan and Arthur (2006) introduced four broad career profiles: low on both types of mobility; low on one type and high on the other type and vice versa; and high on both types. At the same time, Briscoe and associates (2006) developed a 13-item scale to measure the boundaryless mindset (eight items, Cronbach alpha: .89) and mobility preferences (five items, Cronbach alpha: .75). Although the reliability and validity of the tool were confirmed by later studies, it has been criticised for eliminating career boundaries in inter-organisational mobility (Inkson et al., 2012). Thus, the ability of the existing operationalisation to fully encompass the meaning of the boundaryless career has been questioned (Gubler et al., 2014). As an alternative, Gubler and associates (2014) advocated a new 15- item scale to explore five aspects of the boundaryless career. However, further research is required to examine the generalisability of the scale in different contexts (Gubler et al., 2014).

2.1.2.4 Protean career

The idea of the Protean career was first introduced by Hall (1976) to reflect a new type of career that can be differentiated from traditional ideology. Named after the Greek god, Proteus, the Protean career metaphor refers to career processes that are directed and redirected from time to time by individuals more than by institutions, satisfying individuals' needs throughout their life. Therefore, 'the path to the top' and conventional success criteria, such as salaries and hierarchical advancement, have been replaced by 'the path with heart' and psychological success criteria, exemplifying 'the feeling of pride and personal accomplishment that comes from knowing that one has done one's personal best' (Hall, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1996). The importance of the organisation is still acknowledged, as both employers and employees enjoy the maximum benefits of employment by combining high loyalty with a Protean career orientation (Hall, 2002).

Paying special attention to career progress over a lifetime, Hall and Mirvis (1996) emphasised the significance of a series of short learning cycles to enhance performance (Hall, 2002) and to cope with the unpredictability of the current turbulent environment (Hall, 2002) in early, mid and late career stages (Hall, 2002). Such learning enables individuals to question their current career paths in terms of their own personal values (Sargent & Domberger, 2007).

Underlying the Protean career are two meta-competencies – powerful competencies that affect the acquisition of other competencies –defined as adaptability and identity (Hall, 2002). Together, these enable individuals to be successful in a context emphasising autonomy, self-direction, and proactive behaviour. In addition to these two meta-competencies, there are two prominent attitudes, so-called 'value-driven' and 'self-directed' positioning, which help to distinguish Protean careerists from other careerists (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Hall, 2004). The 'value-driven' attitude shapes individuals' psychological success while the 'value-driven' attitude encourages people to learn, produce a good performance, and take on work challenges (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Hall, 1996; Hall & Moss, 1998). These two attitudes are not presented as a dichotomy (having vs not having) but as a continuum (low to high level) and result in four career profiles: dependent, reactive, rigid, and Protean career orientation. Dependent career profiles include people who have low adaptability and identity. Reactive employees are those who can manage their career based on external values (such as organisational values) but not internal values. Rigid people are those who emphasise their values but do not manage their own career successfully. Finally, employees who are value-driven and self-directed are known as Protean employees.

The distinctiveness and overlap between the Protean and the boundaryless career are topics of debate in the career literature (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). For instance, the Protean career can emerge during the process of crossing career boundaries, while the boundaryless career can reveal characteristics of the Protean career (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Although several attempts have been made to separate these concepts, little work has been done to empirically examine their interactions and relative independence (see Briscoe et al., 2006 for exceptions). Given the intertwined nature of these constructs, Briscoe et al. (2006) developed scales for boundaryless measurement (eight boundaryless mindset items with Cronbach alpha: .89; five mobility reference items with Cronbach alpha: .75) and Protean measurement (eight self-directed items with Cronbach alpha: .81 and six value-driven items with Cronbach's alpha .69).

Theoretically, there are 16 possibilities for combining Protean and boundaryless career dimensions (Briscoe et al., 2006). However, there are eight specific scenarios these scholars subjectively believed were more likely to happen in real life. Individuals who display a high level of these four dimensions are called Protean Career Architects. By contrast, people who demonstrate

a low level of all these dimensions are called Trapped/ Lost as they have little control over their limited career possibilities. Between these two extremes are the remaining five career profiles: Fortressed, the Wanderer, the Idealist, Organisation man/ woman; Solid citizen, and Hired gun/ Hired hand. These profiles indicate a high level of one, two, or three dimensions, and a low level of the rest. Each of these eight career profiles is associated with different types of individual and organisational risk in terms of career management and require different practices to enhance individual careers (Briscoe et al., 2006).

The two factors that comprise Briscoe et al.*'s* (2006) Protean scale, unfortunately, have not been confirmed by later studies (Baruch, 2014). Therefore, a seven-item scale was introduced by Baruch (2014) to tackle the issues arising from previous scales (Cronbach's alpha ranging from .74 to .84). This recently developed scale requires further empirical support from relevant research in the future.

The popularity of these career concepts may be due to the lack of fresh perspectives in contemporary career literature (Arthur, 2008). For instance, Schein (2007) pointed out that career scholars have invested enormous effort in dominant constructs. In so doing, many existing studies have concentrated on statistical operations. Few have advocated exploring insights into research phenomena (Schein, 2007). Furthermore, these career concepts were developed to advocate different attributes, competencies or behaviours rather than advancing career development, leading to insufficient knowledge of the latter (Hirschi & Dauwalder, 2015).

2.1.3   Statement of problem and research questions

Research in careers, according to Gunz and Peiperl (2007), 'is the product of a particular perspective, in a particular set of cultures, at a particular point in time'. Conventional career literature offers 'very Western theory' (Patton & McMahon, 2014; Pringle & Mallon, 2003) and ignores the economic, political, and cultural contexts of less developed countries (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007). In particular, the effects of globalisation on career development and the transition from central planning to a free-market economy in countries such as Vietnam have highlighted the importance of considering national contexts in career research (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007). Political and economic factors, in turn, are closely linked to culture which contributes to career norms by shaping both society's and individuals' career beliefs, perceptions, and expectations. Thus, it is essential to examine careers within different cultural contexts (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007).

Moreover, the contemporary career field urgently needs more integrative and interdisciplinary approaches (Arthur, 2008; Chudzikowski & Mayrhofer, 2011; Dany, 2014; Hirschi & Dauwalder, 2015; Khapova & Arthur, 2011; Patton & McMahon, 2014). Empirical research

employing novel methods is also required to produce fresh perspectives on careers (Arthur, 2008; Chudzikowski & Mayrhofer, 2011).

To address the above gaps, I applied what Gunz and Peiperl (2007) termed 'indigenous research', focusing on different modes of career management within a single country. Vietnam was selected as the national context for this study because of its distinct economy, politics, and culture compared with Western countries. In addition, although Vietnam shares several characteristics in common with China, Eastern Europe (EE), and the former Soviet Union (FSU), it exhibits major differences from these countries (Lee, 2006; Phan & Coxhead, 2013), making it a critical case for a career ecosystem study.

This exploratory qualitative study hence aimed to address the following research questions:

●What are the most prominent individual career phenomena arising out of an emerging economy?

●How do these individual career phenomena interact and interconnect?

●Which career concepts and theories are most suitable for explaining individual career phenomena?

2.2   Research methodology

2.2.1   Methodology

The career discipline was initially directed by the positivist paradigm in which objectivity, facts, and value-free knowledge were prioritised. Individuals were assumed to be independent from their context, environmental factors received less attention, and individual behaviours could be quantified via linear measurement (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Recently, postmodern thinking has become increasingly important and has brought subjectivity, perspectivity, multiple truths, interpretivism, and contextualism to the field. Career views have shifted from an objective self with measurable characteristics to a socially constructed self with a multiplicity of meaning (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

Following the evolution of the career discipline, this study aimed to achieve a profound understanding of individual career phenomena in Vietnam based on a constructivist worldview. Its theoretical stance was that human beings are different from physical phenomenon because of their meaning-making ability and that reality is perceived through social interactions and open to wide interpretations by people from different contexts. Thus, definite and universal 'laws' do not work in social science. Additionally, interpretivist research focus on the complexity, richness, and multiplicity of social phenomena. Interpretivists are exposed to the world of research participants

and interpret meaning based on their worldview. Although subjectivity is unavoidable, the interpretivist paradigm was therefore appropriate for exploring the complex and unique business and management context (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2015).

Taking interpretivist/ constructivist worldview, qualitative research opens to the complexity, variety and diversity of research objects, representing their entirety in everyday life (Flick, 2014). Qualitative research is relevant to social study because of the pluralization of the life worlds. Its goal is not to test documented theories about clear cause-effect relationships but to explore and develop new and empirically based theories. Essential features of qualitative research are the appropriateness of the research method, the empirically grounded findings and the reflexivity of researchers during research process (Flick, 2014).

Qualitative research methods fit well with the current indigenous research for several reasons. First, the research methods meet requirements of indigenous research such as holistic knowledge arising from interconnectivity, interdependency and multiplicity of voices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Flick, 2014). Second, principles of indigenous research such as culturally contextualization, community-embeddedness, flexibility, transferability but not universality are central to qualitative research method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Flick, 2014). Third, both indigenous research and qualitative research methods pay attention to values of participants and researchers during the research process such as respectfulness, reciprocity and responsibility (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Flick, 2014). Specific qualitative method choices of this exploratory qualitative research will be presented in the following section.

2.2.2   Research context

The natural context in which 'reality' is embedded is the primary concern of qualitative research. Instead of focusing on law – like generalisation, qualitative researchers emphasise variety and fresh features in the way people feel and function in their natural settings (Korstjen, & Moser, 2017). Chaos and order in Vietnam, as discussed below, provide a rich context for understanding the dynamics of individual careers.

After becoming independent, Vietnam followed the former Soviet Union model of socialism and a planned economy, separated from the capitalist world (Jenkins, 2004a). However, the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the transition from a planned to a more open market system (Jenkins, 2004a). Unlike most reforms in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, *Doi moi* in Vietnam has taken place over a long period of time (Phan & Coxhead, 2013). The reform began in 1986 in an effort to liberalise trade and enhance foreign investment. However, in its early stages, the Vietnamese government created a high level of protection and preferential

treatment for state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in terms of capital and labour market segmentation (Athukorala, 2006). Private enterprises and joint ventures were unfairly treated until their involvement in the global economy was partly facilitated in the early 2000s (Phan and Coxhead, 2013). Currently, SOEs are more capital-intensive than the private domestic sector, which has resulted in an incomplete transition (Jenkins, 2004b; Phan &Coxhead, 2013).

Industrial relations in Vietnam have also experienced modernisation since the early 1990s (Lee, 2006). Before this transformation, the national union organisation, the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL), functioned as a representative of the Communist Party. The voice of the workers was ignored. However, industrial relations have been transformed since the 1990s. This has included revising the trade union laws (1990), restructuring union constitutions (1993), adopting new labour laws, and practising collective bargaining and tripartite consultation at an organisational and national level within the scope of socialist politics. These have contributed to more dynamic industrial relations in Vietnam.

The dynamic is expressed in terms of cooperation and competition between and within national level actors such as the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industries (VCCI), Vietnam Cooperative Alliance (VCA), and sectoral associations of business. However, at an organisational level, the operation of trade unions is controlled by managerial staff. Nevertheless, Vietnamese workers display a high degree of solidarity, especially in collective actions such as 'wildcat strikes'. These, in turn, are generally supported by the general public and public authorities (Lee, 2006).

However, the incompleteness of the transition has resulted in labour issues such as employment growth (Jenkins, 2004b), wage increases, and an unsolved return on human capital investment (Phan & Coxhead, 2013) For example, although average real wages have risen since the 2000s, the rate of salary growth has slowed. Special treatment for SOEs has widened the wage gap and the return on education gap between employees in public and private sectors. Moreover, the return on human capital investment in Vietnam is still below international standards (Phan & Coxhead, 2013). Furthermore, SOE labour forces are not productive as a result of restructuring, reorganising, and lay-off pressures, and have not contributed significantly to creating new employment (Jenkins, 2004b).

By contrast, while the private domestic sector is more efficient and labour- intensive than SOEs, it faces critical constraints on access to necessary resources. Additionally, the fact that capital-intensive and import industries dominate labour-intensive industries has prevented growth in employment. Current labour contracts and policies are also unfavourable to short-term employment and labour mobility, eliminating potential solutions to unemployment. Other factors

that have led to unemployment are the desire to increase productivity and the restructuring of the manufacturing sector (Jenkins, 2004b).

Responding to structural reform and economic growth, Human Resource Management in Vietnam has undergone dramatic changes (Nguyen, Teo & Ho, 2018). Several years after the introduction of *Doi moi,* the need to develop the management competencies of civil service staff and improve compensation, training, performance, and the public administration system increased the awareness of HRM values (Nguyen, Teo & Ho, 2018). Contextual factors such as the Asian Financial Crisis and being membership of ASEAN and APTA then led the transformation traditional of personnel management into an effective function which included the incorporation of Western concepts and philosophy into HRM. Since 2004, the country has achieved a great deal, impelling organisations to adopt strategic human resource management (Nguyen, Teo & Ho, 2018).

2.2.3 Research procedures

The design of this qualitative research began with two key concerns: high quality and ethical standards. In terms of quality criteria, features such as coherence, credibility, rigour and reflexibility were carefully considered during the design and implementation of this research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). First, the research paradigm was aligned with the original purpose of the research and existing literature. Data collection and emerging findings then led to reflection and/ or challenges to the initial design, resulting in adaptations where necessary. These fine-tuning cycles enabled me to create meaningful coherence (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). Second, the inclusion of multiple voices and a variety of opinions within the research settings, prolonged engagement with participants, asking for their reflections, persistence in observation and analysis, all contributed to enhancing the credibility of this research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). Third, rich, complex, flexible, and multifaceted descriptions and explanations of concepts, interactions, situations, and actors underlying the research phenomena were prioritised (Tracy, & Hinrichs, 2017). Finally, because subjectivity is unavoidable in qualitative research, my role as researcher was reflected so that audiences had sufficient information on which to judge the quality of this study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Regarding ethical standards, universal practices such as participants' right to confidentiality and the protection of their identity and privacy were followed to prevent participants suffering from any harm. Additionally, dispositional practices such as recording, acting kindly and empathetically, data protection, writing and publishing reports were sensitively conducted. These issues will be explained in detail in the following paragraphs (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017).

Prioritising in-depth description, exploration, and explanation of the research phenomena means that a large sample was not as essential as accessing rich information (Korstjens, & Moser, 2017). Thus, this qualitative research began by recruiting participants with a different employment status and who have demonstrated outstanding career management ability in the North, South, and Centre of Vietnam. The sampling plan was then reviewed and adjusted in line with the dual process of data collection and analysis (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In particular, people in Central region who had a lower level of self-management efficacy were selected to provide comparative cases and a comprehensive understanding of individual careers. The sampling process was completed when new respondents did not provide any new analytical information and available data already offered in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon, including its full patterns, categories, and variety (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

The research was conducted in three different regions of Vietnam (South, North, and Central), with 83 respondents of differing employment and occupational status. This number of participants reflected a saturation point at which sufficient information was obtained, further coding was not meaningful, and replication was possible (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Summaries of each of the respondents are presented in Appendix 1.

Enter Appendix 1 about here

I recruited target participants via purposive sampling. Specifically, typical and outlier case sampling (Teddlie & Yu, 2007) were applied to ensure representativeness and comparability among different groups. Participants were classified based on their age, area of origin, education, occupation, and type of employment. Demographic information on participants is presented in Appendices 2- 6.

Enter Appendices 2-6 about here

Interviewees were recruited in two stages. In the first stage, I used several different starting points to approach potential participants and ensure the diversity of the sample. Initially, I contacted 60 potential participants who were high tier careerists in North, South, and Central Vietnam. I explained to them the purposes and meaning of this study, how they might contribute to its success, how their information would be used, and how confidentiality would be maintained. My assumption was that these proactive careerists would be better sources of career ecosystem information. Forty participants attended the first stage of the narrative interview. A narrative

interview technique was used for the first stage of this exploratory qualitative study because the career narrative approach offers lifelong flexibility in individual career paths (Del Corso & Rehfuss, 2011). Rather than considering careerists as individuals who simply possess some static traits (Savickas, 2005), narratives holistically reflect what, why, and how individuals develop their careers over time (Savickas, 2005).

During the first stage of the interview, participants were asked to talk in Vietnamese about the 'what, why, and how' aspects of their career progression, starting from their first job and ending with their current job. Follow-up questions were then asked that encouraged the prolonged engagement of interviewees. Initial ideas emerging from the analysis were discussed with some key informants (Table 2). Questions, critique, feedback, and affirmation of these ideas helped me to address research topics more effectively. In fact, their reflections encouraged me to conduct further interviews with less proactive and more passive employees, especially those from disadvantaged work groups. These ideas are described in the research audit trail and sample memos in Appendices 7 and 8.

During the second stage, 55 potential participants from the Central, least developed region were contacted. A total of 43 people participated in the second set of interviews. The interview questions included four main sections: work and individual characteristics, career self-management, and outcomes. Based on the answers given by participants, questions were flexibly revised and adjusted. The interview preparation documents are presented in Appendix 9. The length of interviews varied from 30 minutes to two hours.

Enter Appendices 7-9 about here

I applied practices of data management, coding, and referencing to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. For example, at the end of each interview, I carefully transcribed the recorded files, reviewed the interview notes, and transferred my thoughts about the interview into interview memos (Saunders, Mark & Townsend, 2016). All these documents were stored in NVivo software, enabling further rigorous analysis (Silver & Lewins, 2014). I also recruited independent 'outsiders' to help with the coding process and check the reliability of the coding schema. The first six transcripts were analysed independently by myself and two other colleagues. We then discussed the codes and concepts we had generated. Any differences were thoroughly reviewed, recoded, and relabelled until a consensus was reached Follow-up analytical sessions were organised to develop the most suitable interpretation and acquire the intended depth of insight.

To make sense of the interview data, it was necessary to move back and forth between interview transcripts, notes, and memos. To find answers to the research questions, data analysis involved consolidating, reducing, comparing, and interpreting interviewees' responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The main purpose of this analysis was to recognise patterns (what and how things happen) and seek reliable explanations (why such things happen) (Saldaña, 2015). To develop the coding structure, I moved through a two-stage analysis process (Saldaña, 2015) first-cycle and second-cycle coding (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013). Specifically, first-order concepts and second-order themes emerged at the end of the first-cycle coding and aggregate dimensions were generated after the second-cycle coding (Appendix 10).

Enter Appendix 10 about here

Table 2: Example of emerging themes from the first stage of the interview

Transcript extract (Participant 21)	Emerging theme
My first job was an automobile engineer for a state-owned corporation in 2004. Technical staff had nothing to do. Observed floor-workers to learn. Feeling bored. Requested to work as a floor-worker. Hard work, low income, depressed, ambiguity.	Work characteristic
Exhausted, stayed in the hospital and read the book "Getting rich your own way". Becoming rich is generated from sales, and I changed my mind, read many books related to sales.	Learning
Keen on sales. Left the state-owned company. Applied for sales positions in different automobile dealers and received no reply within 2 months. Continued and fortunately received interview invitations from 2 companies. It was so strange because I hadn't known what an interview was. The recruiter said that because my major was automobile technique, the company could only hire me for a service advisor job. If I could not get my desired job directly, I could take another path. Service advisor is also closely linked to customers. Although not doing sales, service advisor was still relevant and I could access the customer base. everything to operate the company and work with customers and partners.	Mobility, career navigation
After three years, I became one of the excellent advisors in the company and was rewarded with a tour to Singapore. However, my goal was still to become a salesperson. When I returned, I took a break and asked the director to swap the jobs but he did not agree.	Performance, work resources vs constraints
I decided to quit while not having an alternate job. Asked friends for help. Luckily, one guy introduced me to his general director and I was offered the sales position.	Mobility, networking
Because of my passion for sales, I became the best salesman in the first year. This was unexpected for the company because the economy was very difficult at that time; the tax on that car also increased, the electricity bill increased, there was a month to sell 30 cars, a month to sell 8 cars. Then, after that, the company appointed me to a business manager position.	Performance, work resources
I attended many courses, played with many successful people, rich people. I realized that in order to get rich, I had to do it for myself and not work as a hired employee forever. Deciding that this month I will resign, build an e-commerce-style website, sell many items, not just cars.	Learning, networking, mobility

During the first coding cycle, I deployed different coding techniques, including attribute, initial, structural, value, evaluation, process, causation, and simultaneous coding, and sub-coding (Saldaña, 2015). Attribute coding is a coding technique used at the beginning of data analysis to document the basic descriptions of participants (Saldaña, 2015). Initial coding enables researchers

to look deeply at the data to identify similarities and differences among discrete parts of the qualitative content. Structural coding involves assigning conceptual phrases to particular segments of data. Value coding reflects the values, attitudes, and beliefs of participants. Evaluation coding describes, compares, and predicts attributes and patterns in participants' responses. Process coding focuses on actions, their emergence, changes, and sequences over time. Finally, causation coding reveals causal relationships among phenomena. To build theories, the coding locates causes, outcomes, and connections between the two. Narrative sequences are a good source of causal inferences (Franzosi, 2010). For example, signals such as 'because', 'so', 'therefore', 'since', 'as a result of', 'the reason is', 'that's why', and so on may inform potential causation. In addition, sequences of events mentioned in participants' stories are also good references for causal interpretation.

In this qualitative study, early coding efforts then developed into initial coding comprising word-by-word, line-by-line, and incident-to-incident coding (Charmaz, 2014). This enabled me to explore all possible theoretical directions in the data, leading to first-order concepts. I then combined structural coding with values, evaluation, process, and causation coding (Saldaña, 2015) to find answers to the research questions. Specifically, evaluation and causation coding were used to explore themes relating to the different ways in which individual, organisational, and other contextual environmental factors affect individual careers and outcomes of contemporary career management. Value, process, and causation coding enabled me to gain insights into the contemporary career management process and intra-relationships among different elements of the process (Table 3).

To comprehensively process the data, I applied simultaneous coding for different codes relating to a single text in an interview transcript, and sub-coding to break preliminary categories down into sub-categories. This was based on Spardley's (1979) strict inclusion (X is a kind of Y) and attribution (X is an attribute of characteristics of Y) methods of classification.
Second-order themes of the coding structure emerged at the end of first-cycle coding. Throughout this stage, I conducted cluster, comparative and cross-case analysis to identify relevant themes among participants and different groups of participants. I then reached the second stage of analysis which involved looking for patterns and interpreting emergent themes. The coding enabled me to develop the theories (aggregate dimension features in the coding structure) from previous emergent themes. Because codes are sometimes expressed explicitly (Saldaña, 2015), I referred to my analytic memo to interpret any hidden messages in participants' speech and thoroughly translated meaningful and selective quotations.

The next step in this qualitative analysis was to transform coded qualitative data into quantitative data. The quantitising techniques employed included counting the frequency of qualitative codes and themes, and enumerating the percentage of relevant themes and people referring to such themes (Driscoll, Yeboad, Salib & Rupert, 2007). Overall, the careful selection of a research paradigm, approaches, and methods satisfied the quality criteria for qualitative research such as credibility, dependability, confirmatory, transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), explicitness, vividness, creativity, thoroughness, and congruence (Cope, 2014).

Table 3: Examples of the application of a coding technique

Transcript extract (Internals\\6)	Coding technique
An HR staff often starts with admin, payroll, and recruiting positions which are usually very boring. For me, when learning human resources management, I often think of effectively managing the human resource.	Evaluation coding
My initial motivation to join this company was working in Vietnam but getting international pay.	Causation coding
I managed the operation of this company by myself and I loved it. I learnt to perform things that I didn't known such as administrative procedures, company registration, contacting the Trade and Investment Department from the City Council, making transactions with banks… The Director trusted me and delegate daily operation tasks to me and only check the final results. Thus, I have to know everything to operate the company and work with customers and partners.	Process coding
This is an interesting job and I have value.	Evaluation coding
I chose to study General Business Administration because I thought Accounting was limited to Accounting function, Foreign trade was limited to import and export, Banking to the bank industry, whereas General Business Administration opens to multiple positions and industries.	Causation coding
When you visit our department, the most favourite unit in this company, you will see everything like money, personnel, and contracts…is intervened by four staff. Each of my subordinates is assigned a specific job, but they can do or support other positions, facilitating their advancement and development. I train them to perform multiple tasks.	Process coding
This job enables me to get a good salary, make advancements, and broaden my knowledge, bringing benefits for myself and my employees. From a company perspective, they are not afraid of an unfilled vacancy because there is always a replacement. From employees' perspective, they do not have to fear losing their job because you can get things done anywhere. So I just assign work and give suggestions but do not offer detailed guidance.	Evaluation coding
I used to have the opportunity to study abroad and settle there but I did not follow this direction. I felt as if no one recognized my ability, no one believed that I might work, make my living, support my family, and live in the place that I love. I want to build my own path here, to be recognized by everyone. Although the salary is lower, the environment provides good conditions for my initiatives, creativity, and identity. I work with many clients and they invite me to work for them. But I still remain here because I have the opportunity to challenge myself, to produce outcomes, to attach myself to the company and lay the foundations for my future.	Value coding

2.3   Findings and discussion

2.3.1. RQ1: Most frequently mentioned career phenomena: relevant concepts and theories

In this exploratory study, the most frequently mentioned career phenomena emerging from the natural career context were work characteristics, goals, mobility, learning, satisfaction, characteristics, performance, self-direction, networking, occupational orientation, commitment, and employability. Also evident, albeit to a lesser degree, were planning, opportunity taking, problem solving, capital mobilisation, change resistance, and indecisiveness (see Table 4 for a list of nodes in order of popularity). Unlike existing systematic approaches to researching prominent literature-driven career concepts (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017; Baruch et al., 2015; Lee, Felps & Baruch, 2014), the findings provide fresh and natural explanations of career phenomena, enriching our current understanding of the career world.

In the rest of this section, I will discuss the most popular career phenomena thoroughly and then reflect on key points pertaining to less popular phenomena.

Table 4 Summary of Nodes

Nodes	Frequency with which they were mentioned by participants	Number of participants mentioning them	Nodes	Frequency with which they were mentioned by participants	Number of participants mentioning them
Work characteristics	**159**		**Goal**	**134**	
Work constraints	21	18	Entrepreneurial goal	37	26
Developmental constraints	6	5	Life-work congruence	17	16
Financial constraints	8	5	No goal	3	3
Lay-off	3	3	Objective goal	40	31
Market constraints	1	1	Subjective goal	37	29

Physical constraints	14	13	**Mobility**	**125**	
Psychological constraints	22	18	*Mobility*	121	15
Work-life conflict	2	1	*Mobility outside organisation*	33	2
Work requirement	54	42	Multidirectional mobility	21	11
Characteristics	6	5	Outward organisation mobility	10	8
Job-related skills	28	19	*Mobility within organisation*	65	3
Physical requirements	5	4	Inter-organisation mobility	43	27
Work support and benefits	84	55	Intra-organisation mobility	7	5
Developmental resources	51	29	Inward organisation mobility	2	2
Employability benefits	5	4	Multidirectional mobility	10	3
Financial resources	10	9	***Non-mobility***	4	4
Market opportunities	6	5	**Self-management**	**120**	
Physical resources	2	2	Self-direction	53	38
Psychological resources	47	34	***Occupational orientation***	49	
Social capital	6	6	Boundary crossing	21	14

Work-life balance	3	3	Bounded orientation	28	20
Learning	**86**	49	Change resistance	6	5
Characteristics	**65**		Indecisiveness	12	5
Conscientiousness	14	14	**Performance**	**57**	44
Passive	8	6	**Networking**	**57**	37
Positive	18	13	**Commitment**	**41**	
Proactive	25	17	Career	13	10
Satisfaction	**57**		Occupation	19	17
Not satisfied	17	17	Organisation	9	6
Satisfied	40	34	**Employability**	**30**	
Planning	**24**	18	High	22	17
Opportunity taking	**24**	17	Low	3	3
Problem solving	**20**	15	Moderate	5	5
Capital mobilisation	**9**	9			

2.3.1.1. Work characteristics

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

Work characteristics consist of work constraints, work requirements, work support, and benefits. Typical work constraints inferred from the interviews were developmental constraints, financial constraints, lay-off, market constraints, physical constraints, psychological constraints, and work-life conflict. Specific work requirements mentioned by participants were grouped into job-holders' characteristics, job-related skills, and physical requirements. The various types of work support and benefits discussed by interviewees were clustered into developmental resources, employability benefits, financial resources, market opportunities, physical resources, psychological resources, social capital, and work-life balance. Examples of different factors relating to work characteristics are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5 Sub-categories and examples of work characteristics

Nodes	Quotation
Work characteristics	
Work constraints	
Developmental constraints	**<Internals\\15>** I worked as a marketer for a Vocational School. I was promoted to be a team leader but work conflicts and unfulfilled ideas caused me to leave the job to start this business.
Financial constraints	**<Internals\\54>** It's hard to feel satisfied with my current life. My husband and I have paid employment but our income is not sufficient to cover everything. Moreover, our kid is going to start school. Hence, I want to work for another company with a higher income. We are saving to open a small restaurant.
Lay-off	**<Internals\\30>** I graduated in 2001 and worked as a white-collar worker, a member of the admin staff. I was made redundant three years ago and opened this restaurant.
Market constraints	**<Internals\\48>** I used to own a small motorbike repair shop. However, because I did not have many customers, I needed to come here.
Physical constraints	**<Internals\\45>** My job is hardship, afflicted, poisonous; it negatively affects my health.
Psychological constraints	**<Internals\\25>** My previous employer has focused on outsourcing for foreign companies, demotivating me.
Work-life conflict	**<Internals\\14>** After my first child, I just wanted to have a job and was offered a general accountant position at company T. However, I could not adhere to their working hours because of my small son.
Work requirements	
Characteristics	**<Internals\\29>** I need to be very alert in my job because a small error may have significant consequences. An accountant needs to be careful.
Job-related skills	**<Internals\\28>** For this senior position, I needed to perform as well after 4 days as people with 3 years' work experience. The higher your position, the more precarious your employment.
Physical requirements	**<Internals\\62>** This job requires high precision and an ability to work in a heavy work environment. Thus, I need to be careful, cautious, and keep fit to provide good performance.
Work support and benefits	
Developmental resources	**<Internals\\28>** My daily work changes every day because I need to attend different meetings covering different topics. I am able to update new products and services

	before they are launched onto the market. Vietnam is a developing country; we may be the first to update things that foreigners bring to this country.
Employability benefits	**<Internals\\51>** Bartending is a hot job because there is high demand from restaurants, hotels, and bars.
Financial resources	**<Internals\\36>** There are many tourists that come to these areas. Thus, this restaurant may generate high profit. In addition, I hire other people to do everything. I just need to observe them. It is an easy job with good and regular income, and respect from employees.
Market opportunities	**<Internals\\32>** I used to work for a public organisation while my husband ran his own advertising company. In 2004, there were only 4/5 printing companies. It is an expensive service. I took that opportunity and set up this company.
Physical resources	**<Internals\\17>** We have a close friend and her parents let us live in their house and raise crickets.
Psychological resources	**<Internals\\53>** I have loved this job since I first learnt about it. It fits me well. I never feel tired or bored with it. On the contrary, I am always excited with the job.
Social capital	**<Internals\\69>** What we have now is always a result of what we did previously. I have sales experience and I may apply this to my new marketing area. My previous relationship helped me obtain market information and we supported each other in our operation. Experience and relationships contribute significantly to my current outcome.
Work-life balance	**<Internals\\39>** I still pursue my current job because it is stable in terms of time and income. After official working hours, I spend time with my children and prepare my business plan.

❖ **What can be learnt from data – theory interaction?**

The prominence of these features of institution-related career phenomena casts a novel perspective on existing literature on organisational careers. In fact, typical Western organisational career planning and management practices, as explained by Lewis and Arnold (2012) and Baruch (2006), were not relevant in this study. Instead, the narratives of participants focus on unexpected but crucial factors that relate to job design theory. These three elements of work characteristics can be explained by the job demands-resources model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001).

Job demands are defined as multiple aspects of the job that require sustained physical and mental effort and incur physiological and psychological costs. Job resources are defined as multiple aspects of the job that facilitate the achievement of work goals, reduce job demands and their related costs, and facilitate individual growth and development (Demerouti et al., 2001). Schaufeli and Taris (2014), however, argued that the definition and distinction between 'demands' and 'resources' is not clear-cut. For the purpose of this study, I grouped the neutral elements of job

demand together and labelled them 'work requirements' while the remaining elements were labelled 'job demands'.

Specific elements of work characteristics coded from interview transcripts also reflect the interdisciplinary nature of job design theory (Oldham & Fried, 2016). Such elements include the, physical, motivational, social, developmental, and other macroeconomic dimensions of job design (Bagdadli & Gianecchini, 2019; Davis, 2010; Humphrey, Nahrang & Morgeson, 2007). The significance of the job design issue in this study reflects close linkages between job design and career theories that have recently been undervalued in the literature (see Dahling & Lauricella, 2017, for an exception).

2.3.1.2. Career goals

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

Career goals were discussed in terms of entrepreneurial goals, objective goals, subjective goals, life-work congruence, and having no goal. Entrepreneurial goals refer to running a business and making specific products or services. Subjective and objective goals are associated with intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, respectively. Life work congruence goals are associated with having a happy family and good career. Finally, people who say they have no goal report ambiguity in their own careers. Examples of respondents' thoughts and feelings concerning their career goals are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Sub-categories and examples of career goals

Nodes	Quotation
Goal	
Entrepreneurial goals	**<Internals\\15>** When I graduated, I did not think that I would work for a company. I wanted to make my own product. **<Internals\\46>** I dream of being an entrepreneur. I like an active, free, and self-controlled working environment. **<Internals\\42>** My career goal is to open and develop my own English centre. I want to manage staff, teachers, and increase my income.
Life work congruence	**<Internals\\16>** For me, my current job is fine. Having a family with a good husband and 2 children is my entire life.

	<Internals\\38> My goal is to have a stable career and for my parents to move here.
No goal	<Internals\\36> I do not know what my favourite job is. I always have my parents' orientation. I do not have any dream or ambition. I studied foreign languages because my parents wanted me to. If they had not directed me, I would not have known which major to choose. It seems that I have not realised my passion for any job. I get bored quickly and do not pay attention to work.
Objective goals	<Internals\\19> I want to get a teaching job at a public university with better benefits and job security. <Internals\\62> Advancement is my current goal. I will not stop doing my best to achieve my goal.
Subjective goals	<Internals\\18> I do not have big goals. I just want to perform my current job well. I try to improve my working skills and acquire valuable experience. <Internals\\50> I am still young and ambitious. Driving myself to success is my goal.

❖ **What can be learnt from data-theory interaction?**

The meaning of goal setting and pursuing an individual career has attracted special attention from career scholars. For example, value-driven is advocated as a substantial element of a protean career orientation (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Although specific values underlying a protean career are not explicitly explained (see Sargent & Domberger, 2007, for an exception), the Kaleidoscope career model states that, throughout their career journeys, individuals will flexibly navigate three perspectives on their career: authenticity (can I be myself in the midst of all of this and still be authentic?), balance (if I make this career decision, can I balance all parts of my life well so that there is e a coherent whole?), and challenge (will I be sufficiently challenged if I accept this career option?). Applying kaleidoscope viewpoints to this study, it can be inferred that people who aim for entrepreneurship may give more priority to challenging aspects of their career. Conversely, people who pursue life-work congruence may emphasise balancing different aspects of their career.

In terms of showing an interest in individual goals within the workplace, advocators of self-determination theory consider institutional factors that increase and/ or decrease three basic human needs: relatedness, competency, and autonomy. These needs can be situated on a continuum: Subjective – Objective – and no goal, corresponding to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic

motivation (external regulation, introjected regulation, and identified regulation), and amotivation, respectively. According to Ryan and Deci (2017), amotivation, as the extreme, signifies a lack of motivation towards an activity. By contrast, intrinsic motivation, the other extreme, refers to the interest and enjoyment obtained from conducting an activity. In between these two extremes are three types of extrinsic motivation: external regulation, which is completely noninternalised; introjected regulation, which arises from internal forces; and identified regulation, which relates to the instrumental value of conducting an activity. External and introjected regulation combine to become controlled motivation while identified regulation and intrinsic motivation combine to become autonomous motivation (Vansteenkiste, Lens, De Witte, De Witte & Deci, 2004).

The assumption underpinning self-determination theory is that people are generally motivated by intrinsic factors. In many circumstances, people are driven by extrinsic rewards. Less common are situations in which people are confused about what they actually want. This continuum of goals is exactly what was found in the narratives of the participants. The relevance of both career and self-determination theories to the findings indicates the potential self-determination theory offers to explain career phenomena (Dahling & Lauricella, 2017)

2.3.1.3 Mobility

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

The third most frequently used term was mobility. The majority of interviewees had moved within and or outside the organisations in which they were employed, while a few had not made any changes. Mobility outside employed organisations includes multidirectional mobility and outward organisation mobility. Mobility within employed organisations consists of inter-organisation mobility, intra-organisation mobility, inward-organisation mobility, and multidirectional mobility. Further classifications and example quotations are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Sub-categories and examples of career mobility

Nodes	Quotation
Mobility	
Mobility	
Mobility outside employed organisations	
Multidirectional mobility	**<Internals\\23>** My initial major was traffic construction technology. I started full-time employment in 1995 and worked with foreign partners. I learnt from their expertise and management experience. My friend and I opened a traffic construction company but it was eventually closed because none of us was

	totally committed to the company. I continued my full-time job and was placed in charge of different managerial positions. Some of my suggestions were rejected. I resigned after 8 years because of intolerable pressures. I moved to another state-owned organisation and left after several months because of the misfit. I set up my own traffic construction consultancy company, performed different temporary paid jobs, and supported my wife in running a commerce and transport service. **<Internals\\66>** I am a Law Lecturer. In 2008, I opened a business consultancy company. In 2012, I established a Business Law Centre. Apart from teaching, I also run my 'K and Associates' law company and Law and Business Consultancy Centre. In addition, I write papers for several magazines and address audiences' questions on the Consumer Protecting Programme of a national broadcasting channel.
Outward organisation mobility	**<Internals\\8>** After graduation, I intentionally applied for different jobs, as the career path for financial management is narrow. I was then offered a job from an online marketing company. I liked that job and worked there for 3 years, my first and only paid job so far. After a year, I built up good relationships with customers as my previous company has a large customer base. I am good at organising events and commercialising art products. I am the first person to sell finger paintings in this city. I then set up this wedding company with three friends. My initial capital was customers' deposits and we did not make any profit in the first one and a half years. Thanks to word of mouth, my wedding company attracted more customers and I resigned from the online marketing company three months ago.
Mobility within employed organisations	
Inter-organisation mobility	**<Internals\\73>** I worked for NGO P in Da Nang. Here, I work for another NGO. Before working in Da Nang, I worked for a private company for 5 years. **<Internals\\70>** My first company sponsored my studies in design at college. After getting my degree, I worked for that company for 5 years. As a worker, you want to work for those who pay more. I then applied for and was offered a technician job at company VT. I worked for this company for 4-5 years. In the labour market, we move to more attractive places which offer a higher salary. I also worked for a Korean company for 6-7 years. Working for a foreign company is more transparent than working for a Vietnamese company. We are busy all the time and have higher productivity than in Vietnamese organisations. I also cooperate with a friend to run our own business.
Intra-organisation mobility	**<Internals\\67>** In terms of changes within the last 8 years, I contributed to 30% of the results while contextual factors contributed to 70%. Opportunities are partly created through preparation. Although we do not know the exact opportunities in advance, we ensure we give our best performance.

Inward organisation mobility	**<Internals\\48>** I used to own a small motorbike repair shop. However, because I did not have many customers, I needed to come here.
Multi-directional mobility	**<Internals\\11>** - I have worked here for a year. + Why did you choose this company? - Firstly, this company helped me to build my personal brand, which provides a big competitive advantage. Secondly, experiencing the working environment here is recommended by people working in this industry. + How long do you plan to stay here? - I am planning to move to another company. + In which business? - Agricultural. + Why? - Firstly, it fits my personal goals. I have some farming land in the countryside and want to take advantage of this if possible. - My initial plan was to develop a franchised chain of coffee shops. However, I realised that I did not have sufficient operational knowledge of aspects such as cost saving or the necessary relationships to fulfil my plan. Moreover, I felt the business was not as promising as I had initially thought.
Non-mobility	**<Internals\\46>** I have not changed my job since graduation.

❖ **What can be learnt from data-theory interaction?**

Contemporary career scholars consider mobility to be the central phenomenon of the boundaryless career model. For instance, Briscoe and Hall (2006) argued that boundaryless orientation and mobility preference are two elements of the boundaryless career. Likewise, Sullivan and Arthur (2006) interpreted the boundaryless career in terms of physical and psychological mobility. Guan, Arthur, Khapova, Hall and Lord (2018) emphasised the importance of different types of mobility in predicting and establishing the effect of a boundaryless career on career success. They classified physical mobility according to Tesluk and Jacob's (1998) integrated model of work experience, which lists role mobility, job-related mobility, organisational mobility, changes of employment, occupational mobility, industrial mobility, geographical mobility, and so on. Guan et al. also argued that the sequence and timing of physical mobility, as well as specific attributes of the changes involved, should be considered. Empirical evidence is, as always, crucial and the current study empirically addresses all of these perspectives on physical mobility. For

instance, participants' responses reflect not only intra- and inter-organisational mobility but also mobility from an organisation to self-employment and vice versa. Furthermore, both multi-directional mobility and temporary non-mobility states are addressed and the underlying circumstances of these changes discussed. Thus, these findings provide evidence to support current thinking regarding physical mobility.

2.3.1.4. Self-management

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

The respondents frequently referred to their ability to self-manage during the interviews (Table 8). Different nuances of career self-management were classified as self-direction, occupational orientation, change resistance, and indecisiveness. Self-direction was expressed as following one's own path to achieve one's career goals. Occupational orientation can be interpreted in two different ways. While some participants demonstrated bounded orientation, developing their career within a particular occupation, other participants aimed to expand their career and move beyond current occupational boundaries. Such people have a boundary-crossing orientation. Change resistance means avoiding or being reluctant to make any change. Finally, indecisiveness means a failure or lack of ability to make career decisions.

Table 8: Sub-categories and examples of self-management

Nodes	Quotation
Self-direction	**<Internals\\23>** I always know what I want. The ideas and voices of others are secondary. **<Internals\\66>** I was born in a remote area. My parents were too busy and poor; thus, after school, I planted vegetables, raised buffalo, and played with friends. Since I was in 9th grade, I have oriented towards being a business consultant.
Occupational orientation	
Boundary-crossing	**<Internals\\26>** My current job is almost irrelevant to my qualifications. In this country, what we do has almost no relationship to what we learn, especially for businesspeople.
Bounded orientation	**<Internals\\18>** If I have a better job, I want it to offer a high salary and relate to my current job.
Change resistance	**<Internals\\36>** I do not want to change job. I want to settle down in my leisurely life.

Indecisiveness	<Internals\\60>
	I do not do this job because of my passion for driving. I am not able to direct my own path. Thus, when my friend asked me to learn driving, I followed him and became a driver.

❖ **What can be learnt from data-theory interaction?**

Dominating conventional discussions of career attitudes are notions of a protean and boundaryless career, which comprises four main dimensions: value-driven, self-direction, physical and psychological mobility (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Careerists naturally talk about their self-direction, mobility, goals, and occupational orientation. As discussed in the previous section, goals and mobility are almost always mentioned. Less popular are self-direction and occupational orientation. In particular, participants address the controversial issue of a 'bounded or boundaryless career' prominent in the literature by reflecting on their boundary-crossing and bounded orientations. Less evident in contemporary career literature is the lack of ability among employees who are vulnerable to a turbulent working environment. Change resistance and indecisiveness are two among several deviant behaviours pertaining to individual career management that occur in daily life but have received little attention in academia. Further research is therefore needed to address the existing bias in the literature.

2.3.1.5. Learning, Satisfaction, and Characteristics

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

The next most popular career terms are learning, satisfaction, and (individual) characteristics. According to most of participants, informal learning was essential for career development. Reflecting on their current career situations, some interviewees expressed satisfaction; others did not. Although the characteristics of participants varied widely, their explanations indicated four main types of personality relevant to individual careers. Thus, people with proactive personalities tend to control situations and/or make things happen; people with positive personalities are more likely to look on the bright side; conscientious people care for the environment and those around them and demonstrate a tendency to tolerate; and, finally, passive people simply go along with most circumstances. Typical quotations are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Sub-categories and examples of learning, satisfaction, and individual characteristics

Nodes	Quotation
Learning	**\<Internals\\4>** I am not concerned with my employers' brand. In any organisation, we may learn many things from the bright side to the dark side. I learn from everyone; no one makes a significant impact on me. **\<Internals\\50>** Whatever job we do, openness to learn and creativity will make us become mature in our job. I will learn English, it's compulsory. If I do not have an ability in English, it becomes very hard to develop. Expertise and innovation are important; however, they require a long process. Temporarily, I will give higher priority to learning English.
Satisfaction	
Not satisfied	**\<Internals\\17>** I have nothing to feel satisfied with. I have not achieved my goal.
Satisfied	**\<Internals\\27>** Overall, I am satisfied with my life. If one thing is not good, there may be other better things. We should not invest all resources in one place.
Characteristics	
Conscientiousness	**\<Internals\\3>** I am open-hearted, caring, and supportive.
Passive	**\<Internals\\60>** I am not one who is able to build many relationships with other people. I am not good at communicating as I am quite shy.
Positive	**\<Internals\\15>** I simply think that I have had no failures. If I have not encountered the situation and give a poor performance, I learn more from the experience. I think in the most positive way.
Proactive	**\<Internals\\56>** I proactively ask other people about anything I am not clear about.

❖ **What can be learnt from data-theory interaction?**

The importance of learning, satisfaction, and individual characteristics are emphasised in career, job design, and self-determination theory. Hall and Mirvis (1996) considered a career to be a series of learning cycles. McClelland (1965) argued that needs are created and strengthened via learning. Job design scholars have shown their enthusiasm for enriched work design, promoting formal and informal learning to enhance employees' chances of success (Parker, 2014; Van der Heijden, Gorgievski & Delange, 2016). Most of the participants in this study also highlighted the role of informal learning as an effective means of career development.

Regarding satisfaction, the explanations of interviewees support the claim enshrined in Cognitive Evaluation Theory (a sub-theory of self-determination theory) that employee satisfaction is a result of the work environment encouraging their agency and confidence (Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004). According to contemporary career scholars (DeVos & Soens, 2008; Heijde & Van Der Heijden, 2006; Lo Presti, Pluviano & Briscoe, 2018), satisfaction is the main indicator of subjective success and job design academics see employee satisfaction as the desired outcome of work design (Parker, 2014).

Individual characteristics are another common aspect in the literature in relation to career, job design, and self-determination. Although the Big Five traits have traditionally dominated vocational behaviour research (Ng, Sorensen, Eby & Feldman, 2007), contemporary research on careers has noted the effect of proactivity on career phenomena (Seibert, Kraimer & Crant, 2001; Fuller Jr & Marler, 2009). However, positivity (or positive psychological capital) is still a new concept among career scholars. Li (2018) was among the first to examine the association between career and positivity. Proactivity is a dispositional construct encompassing change prediction, planning, and perseverance (Bateman & Crant, 1993) while positivity (positive psychology) is a combination of self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). According to self-determination theory, proactivity and positivity are natural tendencies (Ryan & Deci, 2017), whereas job design scholars have focused on proactivity and conscientiousness (achievement orientation and dependability) in relation to the design of the workplace (Demerouti, 2006; Li, Fay, Frese, Harms & Gao, 2014; Lin, Ma, Wang & Wang, 2015; Parker, Bindl & Strauss, 2010). These fragmented views were, unexpectedly, closely connected in conversations with a variety of careerists.

2.3.1.6. Performance, networking, commitment and employability

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

The terms previously discussed are succeeded by performance, networking, commitment, and employability. In this study, performance can be understood in terms of interviewees' benchmarking their current work efficiency in relation to their past efficiency or that of co-workers. Networking refers to establishing, maintaining, and developing relationships with relevant stakeholders. Commitment can be understood from three different perspectives. Firstly, organisational commitment was advocated by employees who have no reason to leave their current organisations and aim to contribute to the development of their organisation. Secondly, occupational commitment was indicated by participants who felt deeply engaged in their

occupation. Finally, career commitment was often associated with entrepreneurial and/or portfolio careerists who strive to overcome any obstacles to develop their own career and organisation. Employability was thus revealed as a continuum on which there was a high, moderate and low level of perceived probability of getting an alternative and/or better job. Descriptions and examples of these individual characteristics are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Sub-categories and examples of performance, networking, commitment, employability

Nodes	Quotation
Performance	**<Internals\\2>** I have been a teacher for 3 years. Compared with my early days, I have made significant progress. I have become more professional and acquired more knowledge. I am always confident that I am able to do better and enhance my competence in the future.
Networking	**<Internals\\34>** I am not a founder. My friend set up a specific website for youths and I joined his team. When other people left because of financial concerns, I still continued with the website. We plan to cooperate with other partners to facilitate further development.
Commitment	
Career	**<Internals\\64>** Owning a business has been my dream for a long time. Thus, I will not give it up to find another job. Instead, I will enhance my current workforce and cultivate a professional and active working environment.
Occupation	**<Internals\\20>** I have not changed my job because this is the job I have been directed towards since I was a child. I am satisfied with my current job and its benefits.
Organisation	**<Internals\\4>** I intend to work here for a long time unless unexpected things happen.
Employability	
High	**<Internals\\16>** Some people introduced me to a new online job. However, I did not have enough time to do it and declined. **<Internals\\28>** This bank needed to pay 4 months' salary to a head-hunter to recruit me. I do not publicise my CV to avoid having to refuse unsuitable jobs. For this job, the HR Manager would normally conduct the interviews but on this occasion the President interviewed me. They did not feel I was too demanding when negotiating income and benefits. There are not many people with similar competences for them to choose from. I have other alternatives available: if I do not work here, I will work for another organisation.
Low	**<Internals\\35>** I have changed jobs several times. The challenge is that I do not have interview experience.
Moderate	**<Internals\\1>** If I need to find a new job, I must make a lot of effort.

❖ **What can be learnt from data-theory interaction?**

While the literature considers both objective (i.e. sales performance, financial profits, and productivity) and subjective (self or other rated) aspects of performance (Nielsen, Nielsen, Ogbonnaya, Kansala, Saari & Isaksson, 2017), only the self-rated feature of performance was mentioned by participants. Similarly, while scholars discuss both internal and external networking (Porter, Woo & Campion, 2016), external networking was a greater concern for the respondents in this study. Somewhat similar to the classification of commitment in the literature (Blau, 2001), organisation, occupation, and career commitment categories in this study reflect the multiple nuances of commitment in a contemporary context. Most notably, the clear distinction made by respondents between career and occupation adds to the commitment literature by solving the confusion between the two (Blau, 2001). From their perspective, occupational commitment refers to an engagement with (a) particular occupation(s), whereas career commitment refers to an engagement with multiple steps (paid employment, self-employment, portfolio career) of the career trajectory. Perceived employability, as explained by the careerists in this study, fits well with the academic definition of employability: an ability to obtain or retain a job within and outside the current organisational context (Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Hetty Van Emmerik, Schreurs, De Cuyper, Jawahar & Peeters, 2012; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007).

2.3.1.7. Other career phenomena

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

Some participants also discussed career terms such as planning, opportunity taking, problem solving, capital mobilisation. Planning involves making specific plans for one's career. Opportunity taking relates to taking advantage of existing or potential opportunities. Problem solving refers to addressing problems that emerge during the working process. Capital mobilisation pertains to accumulating and raising capital in order to establish and run businesses. Table 11 presents some typical explanations of these career terms.

Table 11 Sub-categories and examples of planning, opportunity taking, problem solving, capital mobilisation

Nodes	Quotation
Planning	<Internals\\13> I am afraid of losing direction; thus, I set up long-term goals, short-term goals, and to-do lists every day.

Opportunity taking	<Internals\\28>
	The top 50 people here have the same mind-set. We are not thinking too much about the next 5 years. Instead, we focus on our current performance to prepare for the future.
	<Internals\\33>
	I think opportunities only come when we are seeking them. No opportunity comes to us. Based on my work experience, I am the one who create the opportunities.
Problem solving	<Internals\\55>
	My work is sometimes very pressurised and tense. In such circumstances, we need to plan things that should be done early and things that can be done later. In any situation, we need to be aware of the problems and identify the most suitable solutions.
Capital mobilization	<Internals\\39>
	My goal is to open a bridal shop. To achieve this goal, I need big capital but I may manage it.

2.3.2 RQ2: Interaction and interconnection among individual career phenomena

In this section, the recursive and dynamic features of individual career phenomena are discussed. Firstly, the effects of organisational and individual factors on individual careers are presented. This will be followed by a discussion of the inter and intra relationships between different elements of these factors.

2.3.2.1 Work characteristics as determinants of individual career activities and outcomes

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

Work characteristics have close associations with mobility, commitment, satisfaction, and learning. Work support and benefits and work requirements often lead to positive career activities and outcomes, whereas work constraints usually lead to negative outcomes.

Work support and benefits as influences on individual career

Participants who receive favourable support and benefits may feel satisfied with their job. Such benefits include development and advancement opportunities, psychological resources, and social capital. These encourage employees to engage in learning and networking, move within organisations, satisfy their needs at work, and encourages commitment to their employers. As a result, employees may exhibit better performance and employability. Financial benefits may also

prevent passive employees from moving to other organisations. These effects are revealed in table 12.

Table 12 Effects of work support and benefits on other individual career phenomena

Effects of work support and benefits on other individual career phenomena	
Learning and performance	**Participant 56** I have received tremendous support from my senior co-workers. I am also open to learning. Thus, I have given a better performance.
Networking and employability	**Participant 28** Graduating in 1995, I worked as a lecturer at a famous university and as a freelance interpreter for international conferences. In my first two conferences, I worked with a more senior interpreter. They were given my contact information and then informed me of other opportunities. My networks in the interpreting occupation have been expanded. My current customers are international organisations, ministries in Vietnam, and NGOs.
Satisfaction	**Participant 35** The job does not exert a lot of pressure … it is quite comfortable. Hence, I have more time for my family. I am satisfied with it. **Participant 43** I am quite satisfied with my current job. It's an almost ideal working environment. Because this is a foreign company, activeness and equity are emphasised. They respect employees' ideas and encourage them to present these. I like the working style of foreigners. They are highly demanding regarding work-related issues yet they are very close and approachable. My company also focuses on collective activities. I really like taking part in activities such as stage performance, ceremonies, holidays … Therefore, I love my current workplace. **Participant 50** This place meets international standards for working environments. It is education-matched, interest-matched, and a modern job. My colleagues are happy and sociable. We feel like a family. I am temporarily content, but I want to engage in further development. I am still young and ambitious. Improving myself and becoming successful is my goal.
Mobility	**Participant 11** This company helps me to build my personal brand, which gives me a big competitive advantage. In fact, exposure to this work environment is a good development opportunity for those who work in the retailing industry … … However, I am planning to move to another company in agriculture. I have some farming land in the countryside and I want to take advantage of this if possible.

	Participant 43
	I did not intend to stay in my first job for a long time. The job enabled me to fill gaps in my knowledge and skills during my school-work transition. After that, I began to search for a job that matched my education, interests, and to which I could commit for life.
	Participant 74
	I have only recently moved to this company which is 5 times larger than my previous company in terms of capital and 6 times larger in terms of staffing. I could not develop any further in my previous company but I can do so here.
Commitment/ Entrenchment	**Participant 9**
	The main lesson that I have learnt here is that, as a sales rep, I need to sell products to the highest volume whilst maintaining relationships with customers. I do not want to lose the customer base that I have built up for years just because of temporary pressure. If I do not work here, I may work for another company; however, if I lose my customer networks, I will lose everything.
	Participant 29
	I do not want to work for another boss. Other companies invite me to their organisations, but I am not interested. I am too close to my current boss to leave.
	Participant 52
	This job is not demanding and offers a high monthly salary and annual bonus. The workload only increases in unexpected situations and is lighter during normal days. I can use the phone for free to chat with my friends when I have nothing to do … Although this is not my dream job, it is easy and a high salary job is desired by many people. However, I am now fully involved in this job and therefore do not want to change
	Participant 61
	Working in the banking industry is busy and pressurised but it is worth embarking on. My co-workers are easy going. We are competitive but close to each other and separate our work life from our individual life. I have been promoted to Head of Department for 10 years and I aim to be the Vice Director within the next 5 years. My main goal is to enhance the operational efficiency of my department specifically and my company in general.

Work requirements as influences on individual careers

On-the-job training is a popular method used by organisations to develop their employees. Employees themselves also consider learning at work or fulfilling their work requirements to be crucial in developing their career, bringing them a competitive advantage and enhancing their employability. Table 13 illustrates such influences.

Table 13 Effects of work requirements on other individual career phenomena

Effects of work requirements on other individual career phenomena	
Learning	**Participant 28** Interpreting is a kind of freelance job. For each task, you work with a different co-worker. You do not have any one boss, instead there are people in interpreting networks who you know are the best performers. You need to learn from other people and practice self-learning. **Participant 32** Running a business is hard. For small businesses, the owners need to perform different jobs. Although we hire people, at peak times we need to do every task, working as floor workers, accountants, and marketers. This is totally different from working in a big business where everything is specified. **Participant 79** Lecturers need to have a wide and sound knowledge to convey the right and necessary information to students. They need to learn continuously. If lecturers do not acquire new insights and gain new knowledge, they are not qualified lecturers and cannot make progress in the future.
Employability	**Participant 48** If the new job requires skills and experience equivalent to the current job, I am definitely more competitive than other people. If the new job requires different knowledge, I will learn more in order to provide good performance.

Work constraints as influences on individual careers

In contrast to the work characteristics discussed in the previous section, work constraints often lead to negative career outcomes (Table 14). For example, some participants reported feeling dissatisfied with their uncomfortable working conditions. They were forced to move because of difficult situations and were not confident in their employability.

Table 14 Effects of work constraints on other individual career phenomena

Effects of work constraints on other individual career phenomena	
Mobility	**Participant 30** I graduated in 2001 and worked as a white-collar worker, a member of the admin staff. I was made redundant three years ago and opened this restaurant. **Participant 41** I have changed jobs several times because my previous jobs were uncertain. The main challenge is educational requirements. When you have just a vocational degree, it is very difficult to get a stable white-collar job with sufficient income.

	Participant 48
	I used to own a small motorbike repair shop. However, because I did not have many customers, I needed to come here.
	Participant 82
	After graduation, I could not find a good job. Then my friend suggested that I should apply for a sales job. I was reluctant because accepting that job was such a waste of my undergraduate studies. However, I decided to apply and did that job for several months before I became bored and left. I found that those jobs did not fit my career path and offered a low income that was not sufficient for my needs Moreover, those jobs did not have any special requirements. Thus, everyone could apply. It was not worth my tertiary degree.
	I worked in several other jobs before getting this job. I thought that with a tertiary degree, I should get a better job. However, unemployment forced me to accept similar low-level jobs. Eventually I applied for this company and was offered the job.
Satisfaction	**Participant 63**
	Success means working in your favourite job. If you follow your passion, success will follow you. However, this is a mismatched job. Hence, I do not feel satisfied.
	Participant 83
	Success, for me, is simply having a stable job with a sufficient income. I do not feel satisfied with my current job.
Employability	**Participant 60**
	Honestly, I am looking for another job because my current job is not stable and does not offer good pay. My salary is only enough to provide a living. If I get married, I cannot continue this job. Hence, if I am able to find a better job, I hope to have a stable, sufficient income with resulting benefits for my family life. I am not concerned with the working environment or job fit because there are few alternatives to my preferred job.

Interaction effect of work support and benefits and work constraints

Work constraints and work support and benefits are the double-edged effects of institutional factors (Table 15). In most cases, perceived work constraints in previous organisation(s), and perceived work support and benefits in the new organisation(s), are the main elements contributing to the dynamics of individual careers.

able 15 Interaction effect of work support and benefits and work constraints on individual career outcomes

The double-edged effects of institutional factors
Participant 33 I started here in 2008 after performing different jobs such as administration, clerk…for different companies such as accounting, securities…I felt that those jobs were not good for my future. I would get stuck if I continued those jobs. Hence, I decided to look for another company that offered more challenges and learning opportunities. I have stayed here for 9 years… …I make decisions freely from other people. I simply notify them and thus take responsibility for these decisions. Moving to this company was my best decision. I should have worked in this environment right after graduation, rather than in my previous environment. My personality fits well with commerce. I used to work as an admin staff member in manufacturing, and in the F&B industry. I think that I should do something relating to commerce. **Participant 51** Before getting this job, I was a tour operator for a small travel agency in Da Nang. I felt bored and wanted to try something new. In addition, the previous job did not provide me with a good income. I thought about this job after an unexpected event. When I went to a bar and ordered a cocktail, I observed how they made the cocktail and I was attracted to the performance of the bartender. I then read many books and newspapers about bartending and enrolled in a professional bar service course. I feel bartending is my passion and I am deeply in love with the job. It took me a year and a half to complete the course. At the beginning, I felt it was too difficult, there were too many formulas, too many types of drink that I needed to remember. My interest gradually developed and things became easier. I applied for this resort after receiving my certification. I was confident about getting the job because my English skills are good. I graduated from Foreign Language College. This resort was my first choice because it is near my house; thus, commuting is easy and living costs are low. Moreover, they have a good working environment, with a great deal of support, benefits, and development opportunities. I feel lucky to be accepted here.

❖ **What can be learnt from data-theory interaction?**

The existing disconnect between job design, self-determination and career theories leaves the linkages between effective job design and career related phenomena underexplored (Dahling & Lauricella, 2017; Hall & Las Heras, 2010). The current study fills this gap by illustrating the effects of different dimensions of work characteristics on different career outcomes. For instance, participants mentioned several different effects of job characteristics on career phenomena including networking and performance (Gibson, Hardy, Ronald & Buckley, 2014), turnover intention (Chang, Wang & Huang, 2013; Gibson, Hardy, Ronald & Buckley, 2014), learning motivation (Shih, Jiang, Klein & Wang, 2011), organisational commitment (Rose, Kumar & Pak, 2009), and satisfaction (Mohr, Zoghi, 2008; Rose et al., 2009; Wood, Van Veldhhoven, Croon & deMenezes, 2012).

The underlying mechanism of such effects can be explained with reference to the classic work of Hackman and Oldham (1976). They proposed that motivational work characteristics are expressed in positive behaviour such as job performance and satisfaction through three crucial psychological mechanisms: experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. Advocators of self-determination theory have added to this school of thought by proposing social contexts (autonomy support of work climate) and enduring individual disposition (autonomous orientation) as determinants of intrinsic need satisfaction, affecting their motivation, performance, and adjustment (Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004). Empirical research on the influence of autonomy-supportive contexts on self-motivation, satisfaction, and performance strongly supports this claim. Moreover, in Humphrey, Nahrang and Morgeson's (2007) research, different job design features such as motivational, social, and other work context elements were found to have a significant impact on career outcomes. All these propositions were naturally reflected by participants in their interviews, bridging the self-determination, job design, and career literature.

2.3.2.2 *Career goals as influences on individual careers*

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

Interviewees often mentioned their career goals during our conversations. These goals can be classified into five sub-categories: subjective goals, objective goals, life-work congruence, entrepreneurship goals, and goal ambiguity. Goal ambiguity had negative effects on individual careers, while the other goals were found to have mixed effects.

Subjective goal as influences on individual careers

Subjective goals were often discussed by participants, who aimed to derive intrinsic rewards by improving their performance and pursuing their career destination. Some participants discussed their internal mobility within and commitment to their current organisations. Subjective goals, however, did not always lead to satisfaction. For example, some participants reported feeling dissatisfied because they had not achieved their goals. These interviewees also proposed that self-satisfaction might have a double-edged effect on self-development. Such influences are demonstrated in Table 16.

Table 16 Effects of subjective goals on other individual career phenomena

Effects of subjective goals on other individual career phenomena	
Performance	**Participant 74** Before pursuing a master's study in HRM, I performed assigned tasks ambiguously. Approximately 7-8 years ago, people who had stable jobs did not want to quit their job to study because of discontinuity. However, different people have different ideas. For me, I studied to systematise my knowledge and develop a more comprehensive view of Human Resources. I used to feel like a frog in a well. Having finished my studies, I am still a frog but am now at the top of the well. I am more professional, confident, and know how and where to solve problems.
Satisfaction	**Participant 66** Success, for me, involves setting goals and achieving them. Money has no meaning for me. My goals are to contribute to the development of society. I do not think I am successful because I haven't achieved some of my plans due to factors that were out of my control.
Mobility	**Participant 28** I am an in-house interpreter for this bank. My motivation for working here is to expose the incomplete development of the private sector in Vietnam. If I do not work here, I will not witness the pressures they are experiencing.
Organisational commitment	**Participant 55** I am not thinking of finding another job but I will make every effort to cultivate the best working environment, one that is active and efficient for myself and for the whole company.

Objective goal as influences on individual careers

According to participants, their objective goals consisted of three main components: promotion, financial reward, and physical working conditions. In one sense, these motivations encouraged people to engage in learning activities, to move to a better place, or to stay with their current organisation and enjoy current compensation packages (table 17).

Table 17 Effects of objective goals on other individual career phenomena

Effects of objective goals on other individual career phenomena	
Learning	**Participant 59** My biggest goal is to become a chef. I hope that I can achieve this in the next 3 years. At this time, I have many things to learn. I need to acquire more knowledge and experience. I want to make new and special courses for customers.
Mobility	**Participant 21** I realise that, to be rich, we should work for ourselves not for others. At the end of this month, I will resign and set up a commercial website to sell many products, not just cars.

	Participant 3
	If I could have a better job, I would like to have a fixed-time job which has no night shift, less pressure, a clean and fresh environment, higher income, and stability.
Organisational commitment	**Participant 38**
	My goal is to have a stable career and for my parents to move here. If I quit my job to visit my parents in my hometown, my previous efforts will have become meaningless.

Life-work congruence goal as influences on individual careers

The life-work congruence goal, together with self-direction, often results in satisfaction and commitment. By contrast, a life-work congruence goal associated with indecisiveness and change resistance leads to entrenchment. These scenarios are reflected in Table 18.

Table 18 Effects of life-work congruence goals on other individual career phenomena

Effects of life-work congruence goals on other individual career phenomena	
Satisfaction	**Participant 18**
	My current job is quite stable. I have sufficient income to live. I have a happy family. I feel satisfied.
	Participant 64
	I am really satisfied with what I have now: family, friends, jobs are all very good. I really love and appreciate my current situation.
Organisational commitment/ Entrenchment	**Participant 36**
	More importantly, my parents did not want me to continue with the job. They opened a restaurant near my house so that I could manage it.
	I do not know what my favourite job is. I always follow my parents' orientation. I do not have any dream or ambition. I studied foreign language because my parents wanted me to. If they had not directed me, I would not have known which major to choose.
	Participant 38
	My goal is to have a stable career and for my parents to move here. If I quit my job to visit my parents in my hometown, my previous efforts will have become meaningless.

Entrepreneurial goals as influences on individual careers

People who aim to start their own business are often involved in different career management activities, including networking and learning. Even though entrepreneurship is associated with a

high level of risk, these participants indicated their high level of career commitment. During the entrepreneurship process, these individuals often exhibited multi-directional mobility to fulfil their career dreams. Table 19 exemplifies these relationships.

Table 19 Effects of entrepreneurial goals on other individual career phenomena

Effects of entrepreneurial goals on other individual career phenomena	
Networking	**Participant 68** My initial business idea emerged when I met Ms Trang. She and her Australian friends came to my previous company. Ms Trang and I realised there was a market demand for seed pots in other countries. Thus, we opened our company. Unfortunately, we had to close it after the business failed.
Learning	**Participant 39** As I mentioned previously, my goal is to own a bridal shop. To achieve the goal, I need to have enough capital but I am able to manage this. More importantly, I am learning to become a professional make-up artist and I am learning about business from my friends as well as reading business and beauty books so that I can run my shop smoothly. **Participant 42** I am maintaining and performing jobs at two different centres. I am accumulating experience and capital so that I can open my own English centre. It is not easy to run my own centre. I need to have time to conduct market research so that I can learn how to establish and run the centre. Above all, I believe that I can make it. **Participant 80** Apart from my full-time job, I also worked for outside projects to enhance my savings. Although commuting between construction sites makes me tired, it helps me to meet new people and learn from their experience, benefiting my entrepreneurial intentions.
Mobility	**Participant 15** When I graduated, I did not think that I would work for a company. I wanted to make my own products and finally began with coconut oil, although I did not have a deep understanding of the cosmetic world. My family also pressured me to work for a company. Thus, I worked for a cosmetic shop for 2 months and then as a marketer for a Vocational School. I was promoted to team leader; however, work conflicts and unfulfilled ideas caused me to leave the job to start this business. **Participant 78** In the short-term, I will search for a business development job to acquire experience and develop my competence. After becoming a competent member of the business development staff, I will apply for supervisor positions to gain experience of managerial jobs and accumulate capital so that I can start my own company.

Career commitment	**Participant 25** My goal is to develop this company to become a sustainable business. My previous employer focused on outsourcing to foreign companies, demotivating me. Because I have lived abroad for a long time, I want to have Vietnamese-made products. Initially, I started a small company. In terms of a worse-case scenario, other people thought that the company would go bankrupt but I and my team did our best to make it survive. It then merged with another company in 2012 to form the current company . The company then become Number 1 in the mobile game market in 2013.

Goal ambiguity as influences on individual careers

In contrast to previous participants with clear goals, people who reported goal ambiguity often become trapped in feelings of dissatisfaction and low employability (Table 20).

Table 20 Effects of goal ambiguity on other individual career phenomena

Effects of goal ambiguity on other individual career phenomena	
Satisfaction and Employability	**Participant 83** I am not sure about my future career goals. I have not identified what I want to do. I feel ambiguous and have not made any preparations. If I could have a better job, I want one that is stable with a higher income. However, my communication skills are poor. I do not know whether I could deal with the pressures of a new job. I will definitely lag behind others. For me, success means to have a stable job and sufficient income. I am not satisfied with my current job.

❖ **What can be learnt from data -theory interaction?**

The idea that self-determined motivation will have a significant influence on job and career outcomes has been proposed in theoretical terms and, in terms of contemporary job design, is based on Self-Determination theory (Dahling & Lauricella, 2017;) and career theory (Herrmann, Hirchi & Baruch, 2015). In particular, job design research based on self-determination theory pays scrupulous attention to the job outcomes arising from self-determined motivation and autonomous features of work. Contemporary career theory also promotes similar ideas to those of SDT. For instance, protean and boundaryless careerists are expected to demonstrate either self-determined attitudes or behaviours (Dahling & Lauricella, 2017). These contemporary careerists are portrayed in the literature as pursing meaningful career goals defined by their values, motives, needs, dreams, and aspirations (Hall, 2002). Moreover, they are self-reliant and employ a proactive approach to self-career management that involves developing goals, taking charge of their own development, searching for opportunities, and demonstrating flexible mobility (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Lin, 2015).

Although these propositions have been quantitatively tested (Fernet, Austin, Trépanier & Dussault, 2013; Gillet, Gagné, Sauvagere & Fouquereau, 2013; Herrmann, Hirchi & Baruch, 2015) there has been little qualitative interpretation of contextually embedded individual and organisational outcomes. The findings in the current study, therefore, provide ample evidence of the theoretical intersection between self-determination theory and contemporary career understanding. For instance, while both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can lead to favourable and unfavourable career outcomes, amotivation usually results in adverse perspectives on career, supporting the recent findings of Gagné et al. (2015) on the diverse effects autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, and amotivation have on career phenomena. Additionally, the associations between a protean and boundaryless career and entrepreneurial disposition have also been recognised (Fuller & Marler, 2009). This qualitative study thus engages in the dialogue by offering narrative explanations of multiple patterns that are less widely acknowledged in career motivation such as entrepreneurial, objective, and subjective career goals, life work congruence, and the effect of goal ambiguity on individual careers.

2.3.2.3 *Personality as an influence on individual careers*

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

Among four individual characteristics, proactivity and positivity connect strongly with mobility, performance, and high employability; conscientiousness relates to work support and benefits; and passivity is associated with low employability.

Proactivity

Several participants stated that proactivity was their key to success. It enabled them to produce a good performance and climb further up their career ladder (Table 21).

Table 21 Effects of proactivity on other individual career phenomena

Effects of proactivity on other individual career phenomena	
Performance and Mobility	**Participant 55** Proactivity is one of the main factors leading to my current success. **Participant 61** If I am not proactive, I cannot reach this position. Proactivity sounds simple but it is very important and we cannot acquire it easily.

	Many opportunities have opened up for me. Of course, no one can say that luck brings these opportunities. I am the one who creates such opportunities. If I do not confidently show my competence, if I do not share my initiatives, nobody will know my capabilities and thus I cannot obtain any developmental opportunities. Proactivity enables me to perform the job efficiently and build my reputation with my subordinates. As a Head of Department, especially a Business Development Department, achieving targets is essential. If there is no consensus among people, it's really hard to achieve the shared goal.
	Participant 62
	I have encountered many problems: for example, when we had almost finished the assembling process, we became aware of some technical issues while the deadline was approaching. I could not ignore these issues and mobilised staff to work extra-hours to finish on time. Thus, every work step must be followed carefully and meticulously. Planning for potential errors should be done seriously. Blaming cannot solve problems but identifying the right causes and right solutions can. I always proactively solve problems.

Positivity

Positive participants were able to generate surplus energy that enabled them to produce a good performance, move quickly, build their employability, and commit to their own career (Table 22).

Table 22 Effects of positivity on other individual career phenomena

Effects of positivity on other individual career phenomena	
Performance, employability, mobility and commitment	**Participant 12**
	If I am not proactive, I cannot reach this position. Proactivity sounds simple but it is very important and we cannot acquire it easily.
	Many opportunities have opened up for me. Of course, no one can say that luck brings these opportunities. I am the one who creates such opportunities. If I do not confidently show my competence, if I do not share my initiatives, nobody will know my capabilities and thus I cannot obtain any developmental opportunities. Proactivity enables me to perform the job efficiently and build my reputation with my subordinates. As a Head of Department, especially a Business Development Department, achieving targets is essential. If there is no consensus among people, it's really hard to achieve the shared goal.

Conscientiousness

Conscientious people are less likely than proactive and positive people to become high-tier careerists on the labour market, however, they are also more likely than passive people to produce an adequate performance (Table 23).

Table 23 Effects of conscientiousness on other individual career phenomena

Effects of conscientiousness on other individual career phenomena	
Performance	**Participant 57** This is my favourite and best matched job. It fits my personality: gentle and patient. I also love children; thus, I do not think this job is difficult. I sometimes lose my temper but I have learnt to manage myself so that students feel comfortable and love me more.

Passivity

Among the four types of personality, passivity often causes people to be entrenched in the darker side of their career. Passive people are often pushed towards involuntary mobility and have low employability (Table 24).

Table 24 Effects of passivity on other individual career phenomena

Effects of conscientiousness on other individual career phenomena	
Employability and mobility	**Participant 60** I am not a person who is able to build many relationships with other people, I am not good at communicating as I am quite shy. Moreover, I do not have any qualifications; thus, I cannot get a good job. I work mainly for my living and do not think I will stay with this job forever. I do not care whether the job fits me well or not. I just try to work to earn money.

❖ **What can be learnt from data -theory interaction?**

What is most surprising in the current literature is that proactivity, positivity, passivity, and conscientiousness (one of the Big Five traits) are reported to have a significant influence on individual careers. One possible reason for the lack of relevance of the Big Five traits in this study is that no significant advances or developments in trait theory have been made in the study of contemporary careers (Patton & McMahon, 2014). These unexpected findings, fortunately, build a bridge between contemporary careers and two newly developed areas in psychology: proactivity (Li, Fay, Frese, Harms & Gao, 2014; Parker, Bindl & Strauss, 2010) and positive psychology

(Newman, Ucbasaran, Zhu & Hirst, 2014). Integrating these psychological elements into a meta framework of careers such as a career ecosystem and/ or system theory framework may facilitate an exploration of the dynamics and recursiveness of career actors and/or career systems.

The relative importance of trait-related factors is not new in the career literature (Ng & Feldman, 2014; Ng, Sorensen, Eby & Feldman, 2007). However, the Big Five traits have been dominant for decades (Patton & McMahon, 2014); thus, we may expect there to be other relevant characteristics. Therefore, what self-determination theory describes as universal human characteristics: proactivity and positivity, may be worth further scrutiny. Several contemporary career scholars advocate proactivity as the key driver of protean and boundaryless careers (Fuller & Marler, 2009). Very few have paid attention to positivity or positive psychology capital (Luthans, Norman, Avolio & Avey, 2008).

Multiple nuances of outcomes rarely mentioned in the imbalanced career literature (Baruch & Vardi, 2016) were discussed by participants. In particular,, the experience of participants has affirmed the positive relationships between proactivity and positivity, and performance, mobility, employability, and commitment (Plomp, Tims, Akkermans, Khapova, Jansen & Bakker, 2016; Chiesa, Fazi, Guglielmi & Mariani, 2018). The role of conscientiousness in determining job performance has also been noted in the literature (Kepes, McDaniel, 2015; Lin, Ma, Wang & Wang, 2015). Rarely mentioned, however, is the direct influence of passivity although it can be indirectly assumed from proactive personality literature that passivity causes negative results. Therefore, the narratives of ordinary careerists that reflect multiple effects of individual characteristics on careers are something of a novelty in existing career literature.

2.3.2.4 Self-management as an influence on individual careers

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

The self-management of an individual career refers both to the self-direction and occupational orientation of participants and to change resistance and indecisiveness.

Self-direction as an influence on individual careers

Self-direction can be explained in the light of goals (objective goals, life-work congruence and entrepreneurial goals) and contributes to performance, mobility, learning, and commitment (Table 25).

Table 25 Effects of self-direction on other individual career phenomena

Effects of self-direction on other individual career phenomena	
Performance and Learning	**Participant 20** I think my working competence is good. During my tertiary study, I envisaged my own direction and worked as a collaborator for different companies. Hence, when I applied for my full-time job after graduation, I was confident of my working competence. Unlike my cohorts, I did not need to spend time engaging on-the-job training. However, there are still many things I have to learn to enhance my competence.
Mobility	**Participant 32** I used to work for a public organisation while my husband ran his own advertising company. In 2004, there were only 4 or 5 printing companies. I therefore seized the opportunity and set up this company. I plan to maintain and develop this current business and will not change to another business. **Participant 46** This is not a long-term committed job. However, I choose this job for my early career to consolidate and acquire knowledge. It also enables me to have a stable salary to support my current life and my future plans. **Participant 63** I am working for a mismatched job so that I can save money for a matched job in a different place. In addition, I also carry out research and search for relevant information regarding my favourite job. **Participant 67** Your employment will impose different demands over time. Currently, I feel my job is ok. However, I am still open to other opportunities. Unless you work for yourself, if you cannot make any advancement after 3 years it is really hard for you to make a contribution. After 5 years, you cannot stay in the same position and if your boss cannot satisfy your preferences, you need to find another opportunity. Whoever treats you well, you will therefore work for them.
Commitment	**Participant 44** In the future, I want to have a construction company, manage my own projects, and accumulate diverse working experience. It is not too difficult a goal; thus, I believe that I am able to achieve it. I want to develop my company so that it becomes much larger. At this current time, I am focused on performing well, accumulating experience, and developing my ability. **Participant 79** I graduated from the University of Economics and preferred to be a lecturer. I have a passion for doing research and sharing knowledge with students. Even though I studied Economics, my dream since my childhood has been to become a teacher, teaching many students. I really admired my university lecturers. Thus, I decided to pursue a lectureship post. However, obtaining a lectureship at University of Economics was difficult as there was a lot of competition. Hence, I applied for other universities and was offered a job here.

	I have never thought that I will give up my job. Giving up is what people usually do and is the easiest way. I rarely depend on my friends. If it's a personal problem, I will solve it by myself. If I cannot solve my own problems, neither can anyone else. We need to own our lives. To eliminate potential risk, I need to know how to develop scenario plans and propose different alternatives. I need to be flexible in every situation and think of preventative solutions.

Bounded orientation and boundary crossing orientation as influences on individual careers

The distinction between bounded and boundary-crossing orientation is not clear-cut. For example, both can link to mobility and commitment. The main difference emerging from the interviews was that careerists with a bounded orientation often referred to occupational commitment while those with a boundary-crossing orientation often emphasised career commitment.

People with bounded orientation associated this with employability and emphasised occupational commitment (Table 26).

Table 26 Effects of bounded orientation on other individual career phenomena

Effects of bounded orientation on other individual career phenomena	
Employability	**Participant 61** I have had several job offers but I do not want to leave this organisation. After achieving my financial target, I will look for an education-matched job.
Commitment	**Participant 1** I do not intend to change job because it fits me and my major. **Participant 54** I do not want to change job because this is the only job I have ever pursued. However, my ultimate goal is to open a small restaurant with my capital and then expand it. **Participant 77** If I could have a better job, I would rather work in business development. I want my new job to relate to my previous job. However, I should not speculate as I need to focus on my achievements here. Success requires long-term commitment and investment.

By contrast, people with a boundary-crossing orientation frequently talked about learning, mobility, and career commitment (Table 27).

Table 27 Effects of boundary crossing orientation on other individual career phenomena

Effects of boundary-crossing orientation on other individual career phenomena	
Learning, mobility and commitment	**Participant 5** I studied in Education College for a year then changed to an Air Traffic Controller and have pursued this occupation for 12 years. In the process, I obtained a bachelor's degree in Foreign Language and a master's degree in PR. I changed from Education to Air Traffic Controller because it was a hot job at that time. After two years study, I may get a good job with a high income. Working in aviation is quite straightforward. Hence, I studied Foreign Languages to advance my abilities and acquire new knowledge. I also became involved in other business activities in insurance and travel industries and acquired additional experience. I then found that a master's degree in PR would be beneficial. If I am able to learn and practise it, I may be among the pioneers of this occupation and therefore I enrolled on the programme. My friends and I then set up a communication company, fostering the professional communication activities of organisations. After 3 years, the company was closed because of issues relating to connections, attitude, and orientation among the three of us. I have now run this communication company for 8 months. The aviation industry is bureaucratic, lumbering, and prolix. Hence, I used to work for foreign companies and now apply their management approach to my company.

Change resistance and indecisiveness as other axes of self-management

Some participants admitted that they avoided change and could not make career decisions. Consequently, they were not confident of their employability and mobility (Table 28).

Table 28 Effects of change resistance and indecisiveness on other individual career phenomena

Effects of change resistance and indecisiveness on other individual career phenomena	
Employability and mobility	**Participant 52** I used to think of changing my job but am not brave enough to try. As I said earlier, my father arranged this job for me. Thus, I was not worried about the application. However, I am not confident enough to apply for a job by myself. Although this is not my dream job, it is easy and a high salary job is desired by many other people. However, I am now fully involved in this job and therefore do not want to change.

❖ **What can be learnt from data-theory interaction?**

The world of work has experienced significant changes due to pressures from both micro and macro environments. This movement has been simultaneously captured in career, self-determination, and job design theory. In particular, there has been a shift in the career literature

from traditional or organisational careers to individual- focused careers such as protean, boundaryless, and kaleidoscope careers (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Job security, linear progression, and the hierarchy ladder have now been replaced by employability, multidirectional career, and multiple learning cycles (Baruch, 2014; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). While the conventional approach to job design has exclusively emphasised elements of the task environment, contemporary job design scholars have paid more attention to autonomy and motivational aspects of the job. Having steadily evolved over the past decades, self-determination theory has also reflected the way individuals internalise three basic needs in the workplace: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, all of which are influenced by the interaction between individual and environmental forces (Dahling & Lauricella, 2017).

The qualitative findings on self-management contribute to the discussion by elucidating the dynamic relationships between self-career management and its outcomes. For instance, self-direction and occupation orientation is a resource for individual career outcomes such as learning, performance, employability, mobility, and commitment, satisfying the needs of careerists and contributing to institutional functioning. Nevertheless, it would be biased to adopt an overly optimistic perspective. Not everyone is self-determined or self-directed. Employees who are indecisive and afraid of change often face non-voluntary mobility and are not confident of their employability. These dark sides to work are mentioned only modestly in career, self-determination, and job design theory. The significance of value-driven, self-directed career attitudes and boundary-crossing tendencies reflected in this research is not new in career theory as the narratives of interviewees support previous findings in boundaryless and protean career research (Clarke, 2009; Zafar & Mat, 2012; Supeli & Creed, 2016). The fresh insight they provide concerns the way in which change resistance and indecisiveness affect contextually embedded career phenomena.

2.3.2.5 Individual career management activities as influences on outcomes

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

Two prominent career management activities discussed by participants were learning and networking. Other career management activities include planning, opportunity taking, problem solving, and capital mobilisation. However, because these activities are not crucial to other individual career phenomena, I exclude them from this discussion. Determinants of these career activities are mentioned in sub-sections 3.2.1 to 3.2.4. Linkages between these career activities and outcomes are illustrated in the following sub-section.

Learning as influences on career outcomes

Participants often mentioned learning activities simultaneously with performance and mobility (Table29).

Table 29 Effects of learning on other individual career phenomena

Effects of learning on individual career outcomes	
Performance	**Participant 25** I often start with an area where I do not have experience. I then learn gradually and follow a trial and error approach. When I was in charge of training activities at the software company, I was just a beginner. I then became more senior and advanced to higher positions. During the process, I have developed my own lessons for my current organisation.
Mobility	**Participant 13** I have been stuck in this company for 3 years. I am quite stubborn. I will try my best to achieve. When I submitted my resignation letter, I asked my employer to give me another 6 months to improve my performance. Ultimately, I did not provide the added value the company expected. Hence, I was withdrawn. I have learnt much from this failure and, when I start a new job, I will do things differently.

Networking as influences on career outcomes

Networking often links to employability, mobility, and performance (Table 30).

Table 30 Effects of networking on other individual career phenomena

Effects of networking on individual career outcomes	
Employability and mobility	**Participant 72** After studying abroad, I returned to work in recruitment for my previous software company. I then moved to a smart card company. I have since grown up with this company and contributed to its development. Six years later, my job was established and I wanted to learn and challenge myself. As the same time, I enrolled on several training courses and was very impressed by trainers from the South. They were more practical than Northern people. They had experienced different positions before working in the HR field and had more comprehensive views. They prompted me to think about changing my working environment from the North to the South. Fortunately, my friend living in the South introduced me to his Director. The new company was in the middle of a restructuring process which I found interesting and then started working at the new company.
Performance	**Participant 7** Nowadays, we can use Facebook to connect with customers at no cost. Initially, I used Facebook as an advertising tool. I then recognised that customers would

	rather connect with a human being than a machine. I therefore began sharing personal tips, opinions, and ideas with them.
	Participant 23 Running a business requires capital, networks, and hard work. When I carried out a project in Hai Phong, many problems arose during the implementation process. Many 'other costs' were incurred but I could not complain as I wanted to win other projects in the future.
	Participant 64 I moved to another company operating in the import-export area and built many relationships with customers. Quickly seizing opportunities, I opened my own factory. At the early stage of start-up, I faced many difficulties. Fortunately, I received support from many people. Firstly, my customers and partners offered me extremely good and stable prices. We trusted each other. Secondly, my successful friends gave me substantial help.

Interconnectedness between learning and networking

Among different career self-management activities, learning and networking are usually connected. One reason for this is that people acquire informal learning mainly via networking (Table 31).

Table 31 Associations between learning and networking

Associations between learning and networking
Participant 15 I always want to learn more, but not through formal learning because this is not practical. I want to learn practical things. I therefore enrolled in a communications course. It cost 10 million VND for 2 sessions. If it had been 2 sessions only, they would not have been worth the money. However, they created networking opportunities and were therefore good value. Luckily, I sometimes talk to inspiring people. I am not always optimistic and really need to be re-energised. Sometimes I encounter novel situations and I rely on their advice. When I joined in an initiative context, some people came to me and shared their experience in web design and managing costs.

❖ **What can be learnt from data-theory interaction?**

According to the interviewees, making better career decisions involves such activities as learning, networking, planning, opportunity taking, problem solving, and capital mobilising. Among these, the roles of learning and networking are the most crucial career resources. The learning-networking link in this study empirically supports the well-documented roles such behaviours play

in the current employment context. For example, these activities link closely to 'know-why', 'know-how', and 'know-whom' competencies in the boundaryless career (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1996), mini-cycles in the Protean career (Mirvis & Hall, 1996), and social and human capital resources in the current career resources framework (Hirschi, 2012; Paradnike et al., 2016). Thus, they contribute to career success.

The actual function of networking in a research setting is more clearly explained in the organisational and job design literature. For example, Porter, Woo and Campion (2016) argued that external networking increases the likelihood of employment opportunities and job offers, and predicts mobility. Similarly, both Woff and Moser (2010) have shown that internal networking anticipates both promotion and change of employers while external networking results in external mobility. Other researchers have found that networking may affect work performance (Moqbel, Nevo & Kock, 2013; Ng & Chow, 2005) and perceived employability (Batistic & Tymon, 2017).

The relationships between learning and performance and mobility have also been a concern among job design scholars. For example, job learning demand is believed to affect learning motivation and contribute to turnover intentions (Shih, Jiang, Klein & Wang, 2011). Learning motivation, consequently, may result in innovative performance, mediated by knowledge sharing and perceived autonomy (Lu, Long & Leung, 2012), and positively relates to upward mobility and in-house promotion (Lin & Chang, 2005). According to Rose, Kumar and Pak (2009), the effect of organisational learning on work performance is predicted by organisational commitment and job satisfaction. The daily experience of participants in this study comprehensively encompasses the interdependence and interconnectedness of these phenomena.

2.3.2.6 *Interconnectedness between internal influences on individual careers*

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

Associations between the internal determinants of individual careers were explained in interviewees' narratives (Table 32). Notably, individual career goals were closely associated with individual characteristics and self-management. For instance, subjective goals often link to positivity, life work congruence relates to either self-direction or passivity, and goal ambiguity connects to passivity. Self-direction and occupational orientation align with entrepreneurial, subjective, and objective goals in a different manner.

Table 32 Interconnectedness between internal determinants of individual careers

Linkages among internal determinants of individual careers	
Goal and characteristics	➢ Subjective goal and positivity **Participant 4** I simply feel happy when I work because I choose the jobs that I like. I also like doing several jobs. Work is for a good life, not for earning money. Working with the most positive attitude will lead to good performance. ➢ Life-work congruence and passivity **Participant 52** I used to think about changing my job but am not brave enough to try. As I said earlier, my father arranged this job for me. Thus, I was not worried about the application. However, I am not confident enough to apply for a job by myself. Although this is not my dream job, it is easy and a high salary job is desired by many people. However, I am now fully involved in this job and therefore do not want to change ➢ No goal and passivity **Participant 83** I am not sure about my future career goals. I have not identified what I want to do. I feel ambiguous and have not made any preparations. If I could have a better job, I want one that is stable with a higher income. However, my communication skills are poor. I do not know whether I could deal with the pressures of a new job. I will definitely lag behind others.
Goal and self-management	➢ Entrepreneurial goal and self-direction **Participant 5** Our attitudes and perceptions will lead our way. When you have spent your time carrying out research in a particular area and the right opportunities come, you can start-up. **Participant 44** I will work for many construction projects to gain experience. When my competence is high, I will become an independent contractor. I also search for relevant procedures on opening a construction company. The main challenge is capital. In addition, I also need to cooperate with other people. Working for different projects will allow me to find reliable partners. I love reading books on success and wealth. I think these books have a significant impact on my working motivation. **Participant 69** I worked for company N for a year. I then worked for company U for 3 years, company P for 3 years, my own company for 2 years, company H for 2.5 years, and now I have returned to my own company.

My interests and orientation are to work for my own company. I do not want to work for other companies for too long. I may work temporarily for other people for the purposes of money or relationships. My company still operates normally during that period.

> Subjective goal, self-direction, and bounded orientation

Participant 2
After graduation, I could not get a teaching job. Thus, I worked as a receptionist for a small hotel for a year before coming here.
Teaching is the best choice for me and I have never intended to change job or move to another environment. Being offered a permanent job with a stable income at a school in my neighbourhood means I have no reason to change job. Becoming a good teacher, being respected by students, and getting promotion are my aims.

> Objective goal and self-direction

Participant 70
I always need to find a direction for myself. Money is losing its value; hence, I need to find ways to survive. If you work hard, you will not be poor. I perform different positions simultaneously. It was quite challenging at the beginning, but now it has become more manageable.

> Life-work congruence, entrepreneurial goals, and self-direction

Participant 29
My first job was as a construction accountant. I did this for 2 months then moved to a hotel. I worked as a cashier for different hotels with an income 4-5 times higher than that of an accounting job. I had a year-long break for my first child. I then worked as a cashier at a school for 3-4 years before my second child. Because of my age, I worked as an accountant for an advertising company for 3 years. I have worked for this estate company since 2008. My boss buys dying projects, revives them, and sells them on. I also buy and sell apartments. I will retire in the next 5 to 10 years and run my own business. I did not learn any specific model. I follow my own direction. No one believed that I would leave my job at a hotel to return to an accounting job.

Participant 39
I studied nursing as I had always thought that my job would be a nurse. After graduation, I applied to many hospitals and clinics and was invited to interview. However, my parents did not agree because they wanted me to work near my home and had arranged a job at a local school for me. Hence, this is my only job so far.
I am very active and sociable; thus, my current job does not suit me. Moreover, I love innovation, creativity, and I prefer a job with tolerable pressure to provide the motivation for personal development. I also want to have new experiences. Hence, I am learning to conduct a business and hope to open a bridal shop and a cosmetic shop.

❖ **What can be learnt from data-theory interaction?**

One critical shortcoming of classical career theories is that they fail to capture the linkages among individual determinants of careers (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Hirschi (2012) addressed this by proposing an integrative framework of four main career resources: human capital resources, social resources, psychological resources, and identity resources, and the positive relationships that existed between them. Resource, vocational, and organisational research (Hobfoll, 2002; Hakanen, Perhoniemi & Toppinen - Tanner, 2008; Weigl et al., 2016) have shown that the development of one positive resource will promote the accumulation of others. For example, Luyckx, Soenens and Goossens (2006) identified the reinforcement effects taking place between personality characteristics and identity development. Siu, Bakker and Jiang (2014) also reported the relationships between psychological capital and intrinsic motivation. In a similar vein, Hirschi (2012) showed the linkage between career decision making, goal setting, and psychological resources. The stories of participants in this research consolidate the validity of the argument by demonstrating how the accumulation of one positive and/ or negative career resource leads to an increase in another positive and/or negative resource.

2.3.2.7 Interconnectedness among individual career outcomes

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

Individual career outcomes reflect multiple interconnections (Table 33). Performance, for example, is associated with satisfaction, commitment, and mobility. Mobility itself negatively relates to commitment and entrenchment: the higher the probability of mobility, the lower the probability of commitment and entrenchment, and vice versa.

Table 33 Interconnectedness between internal career outcomes

Linkages among individual career outcomes	
(Non-)Mobility and other outcomes	❖ Non-mobility and low employability **Participant 56** As I said earlier, this is my first job; hence, I have not changed job. It's difficult for a new graduate with limited experience like me to satisfy the requirements recruiters have for work experience.

	❖ Mobility and commitment **Participant 55** I am not thinking of finding another job but I will make every effort to cultivate an optimal working environment that is active and efficient, for myself and for the whole company. **Participant 72** In the future, I will continue to work in HR in Vietnam. Our company now has a manufacturing branch and, in the future, we may have a retail branch. Thus, I want to expand my working authority based on regions or on business lines. If I cannot achieve my goal, I will move to another industry but will still work in HR. ❖ Mobility and entrenchment **Participant 52** Although this is not my dream job, it is easy and a high salary job is desired by many people. However, I am now fully involved in this job and therefore do not want to change.
Performance and other outcomes	❖ Performance and (dis)satisfaction **Participant 5** I am really satisfied with my job. Although it has not been successful, I believe that it will become so. I am in the process of developing our services and I can predict what values my service can bring to customers. When your customer achieves success, you achieve success. **Participant 25** I am not satisfied because, if I had not made some mistakes in the past, our company would be in a better position. The direction is the past was not good; however, it points to a long-term direction for the future. ❖ Performance and commitment **Participant 26** I started up after studying for 2 years at university. My management ability at that time was not good. Most of my decisions led to failure. During the first 10 years, I encountered problems with finance, HR, organising, products, and markets. I overcame these failures thanks to my own ability, not through money. I have had to make many adjustments in terms of business lines and open another company. ❖ Performance and mobility

	Participant 17 Running this coffee shop, I have realised that my organising, structuring, and interpersonal skills need to be improved. I should learn from other established organisations. They have spent several decades building their organisations; why would I need to spend an equivalent amount of time if I can learn from them?

❖ **What can be learnt from data-theory interaction?**

The associations between performance and mobility and other career outcomes such as satisfaction, commitment, and/or entrenchment, can be interpreted through the lens of agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Shapiro, 2005). This proposes that the agent (individual) is involved in his or her contract with the principal (working organisation) while also being open to off-the-job opportunities. To make optimal decisions, the agent will relocate his or her effort to maximise the expected utility in terms of monetary and non-monetary rewards from both on-and-off the job opportunities. For example, Becton, Carr, Mossholder and Walker (2017) showed that task performance has a curvilinear relationship with turnover that is moderated by job complexity. Wang, Weng and Jiang (2018) found that occupational commitment moderates the effect of organisational commitment on task performance. Additionally, Bowking, Khazon, Meyer and Burrus (2015) found that situational strength moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. Mobility was also found to predict perceived employability and organisational commitment (Siu, Bakker & Jiang, 2014). In this study, the optimal action of participants is expressed as the relationship between performance and satisfaction, performance and commitment, performance and mobility, mobility and commitment, and/ or entrenchment. This demonstrates the recursiveness, interdependence, and interconnectedness of career phenomena described in the career ecosystem and system theory frameworks.

2.3.2.8 Interactions between internal and external influences on individual careers

❖ **What can be learnt from the thinking of ordinary careerists?**

The interactions between internal and external factors can exert multi-directional effects on individual careers. For instance, in many circumstances work support and benefits lead to

satisfaction (Van de Voorde, Paauwe, & Van Veldhove, 2012), internal mobility (Eby et al., 2005), and organisational commitment (Van de Voorde et al., 2012). Support and benefits, however, are only temporarily perceived. Careerists, hence, may make an external movement to take advantage of committing to their occupations or careers (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2004). In most cases, work requirements are a considerable force for learning (Livingstone, 2010),and work constraints are the main causes of mobility (Chhabra, 2016). Internal influences, however, may change these directions in a different way. For instance, internal elements can consolidate the outcomes of work support and benefits and vice versa. Internal determinants can also strengthen or weaken the consequences of work constraints.

Internal influences as reinforcing work support and benefits effects

Work support and benefits themselves often lead to positive career outcomes. The positive effects, moreover, are exacerbated by the congruence of individual influences (Table 34).

Table 34 Internal influences as reinforcing work support and benefits effects

Internal influences as reinforcing work support and benefits effects
❖ Goals   **Participant 6**   After giving birth, I wanted to resign because I thought that I did not have anything to learn and I had trained my HR subordinate to reach 80% of my productivity. However, my Director asked for accountants so that they might train other people to control our company's financial flow. Moreover, our company has now expanded. In the next 5 years we will have our own building, so who will manage the construction process? Will we become outsourced forever or will we provide training services? When the company becomes bigger, will he be the Director forever? He said that I should only leave if I am ready to run my own business. If I am not, I should stay here because there are many learning and development opportunities.   I want to lay foundations here and be recognised by people. I often work with customers and they have invited me to join their companies. However, I will stay because I have opportunities to challenge myself, to contribute to outcomes, and my name is attached with the company, laying foundations for the future.   **Participant 62**   I have made significant progress from when I first started. Compared with other co-workers, I also provide outstanding performance because I have proactively learnt from other people. I always ensure my work is conducted with precision and caution. I have learnt from others but emphasise my own initiatives. Experience is cultivated by our self-reflection. Practice will help enhance our competence.   I am now able to go abroad to sharpen my capabilities and become an expert when I return. To be an expert, I need to pursue endless learning and communicate effectively.

Participant 64
Owning a business has been my dream for a long time. I want to be self-employed and to own everything that surrounds me: I want to be independent from other people. When I was an employee, there were many things in the organisation I was not happy with or wanted to change. However, I had no authority to make such changes. Hence, I always want to be in a workplace in where I can apply new and advanced ideas.

❖ Characteristics

Participant 43
My first job allowed me to fill my gap as a new graduate through on-the-job learning. Firstly, the job taught me to be consistent and not give up easily. Secondly, even though it was a mismatched job, it enabled me to practise problem-solving, interpersonal skills, and helped me become more confident, more active, and professional, paving the way for my future job.

Participant 57
This is my favourite and best matched job. It fits my personality: gentle and patient. I also love children: thus, I do not think the job is difficult. I sometimes lose my temper but I have learnt to monitor myself so that students feel comfortable and love me more.
I want to have a permanent job at a public school within the next few years. I will continue teaching at some centres to improve my competence.

❖ Goal and characteristics

Participant 7
Doing my favourite job, enjoying my happiness at work. I feel more satisfied than when I was a paid employee. I feel more comfortable. I earn enough money for myself and for my children. Although I have encountered some difficulties, they are not that significant. The most important thing is to have a positive attitude.

❖ Goal and self-management

Participant 5
I studied in Education College for a year then changed to an Air Traffic Controller and I have pursued this occupation for 12 years. In the process, I obtained a bachelor's degree in Foreign Language and a master's degree in PR.
I changed from Education to Air Traffic Controller because it was a hot job at that time. After two years study, I may get a good job with high income. Working in aviation is quite straightforward. Hence, I studied Foreign Languages to advance my abilities and acquire new knowledge. I also became involved in other business activities in insurance and travel industries and acquired additional experience. I then found that a master's degree in PR would be beneficial, If I am able to learn and practise it, I may be among the pioneers of this occupation and therefore I enrolled on the programme. My friends and I then set up a communication company, fostering the professional communication activities of organisations. After 3 years, the company was closed because of issues relating to connections, attitude, and orientation among the three of us. I have now run this communication company for 8 months.
The aviation industry is bureaucratic, lumbering, and prolix. Hence, I used to work for foreign companies and now apply their management approach to my company.

Participant 77

In this company, co-workers support each other. They are very active and progressive, inspiring my work spirit. We compete fairly based on each individual's effort and talent. Healthy competition will increase work value.

I feel satisfied with my working environment. I have opportunities to work with young, active, and enthusiastic people, energising my work. My boss is not too strict. We have transparent compensation systems. Everyone works towards a shared commitment and contributes to the development of our company.

If I could have a better job, I would rather work in business development. I want my new job to relate to my previous job. However, I should not speculate as I need to focus on my achievements here. Success requires long-term commitment and investment.

Internal factors as reinforcing or weakening effects of work constraints

Work constraints more often than not result in negative career outcomes. Such effects, however, may be strengthened or weakened by individual influences (Table 35).

Table 35 Internal factors as reinforcing or weakening effects of work constraints

Internal factors as reinforcing or weakening effects of work constraints
❖ Goals and self-management The negative associations between work constraints and career outcomes are strengthened by individual forces that are intolerant of the constraints.   **Participant 14** After my first child, I just wanted to have a job and was offered a general accountant position at company T. However, I could not adhere to their working hours because of my small son. I then worked for company C. However, as well as my job, they asked me to cook for them. I therefore left the company. **Participant 16** When I resigned, I felt that I needed to quit as soon as possible; if not, I would have lost my occupational direction, my fire, my passion … I left with a peaceful mind. My initial direction is towards becoming a marketing planner, not sales. Hence, I definitely would not stay in the sales job for a long time. After 2 weeks of leaving the first job, I got this job and have been there ever since. **Participant 21** My first employer was a state-owned company. However, technicians had nothing to do. I only observed how the floor workers performed and felt bored. I asked my boss if I could be a floor worker. Job hardship, low income, stress, and worries exhausted me and I went into hospital. During my time in hospital, I read the book: Getting rich your own way. I realised that richness

came from sales. I changed my mind and read other books relating to sales. My passion for sales was aroused and I left the state-owned company.

I then worked as service consultant for three years. Receiving an award as best consultant, I was offered a holiday in Singapore. I recalled my sales goal. I then asked my manager to transfer me to the sales department. He refused and I left. It was an emotional decision because I did not have any alternative jobs at that time.

I have attended several courses and networked with many successful and wealthy people. I realise that, to be rich, we should work for ourselves not for others. At the end of this month, I will resign and set up a commercial website to sell many products, not just cars.

Participant 25

My undergraduate major was in Meteorology but I am now running a game company. After graduation, I worked as a sales rep and became a sales manager from 1996 to 2002. I returned home in 2002 and worked in the telecom industry. In 2005, I worked as a normal staff member in a software company. The CEO of the software company asked me what I would do to increase its staff from 300 to 500-1000 staff. I said that I would apply a sales mindset to HR. Potential employees would be potential customers. After several months, our staff increased to 500 and to 997 in 2006.

Because of the long period I spent living abroad, I aimed to develop a Vietnamese-made product. I started-up in a totally new industry, one that bore no relationship to my previous area of work. I was confident that I would make it and I began again. The software company offered me a very good salary and benefits but I did not come back. When other people thought that my company would die, I and my team did our best to ensure its survival. My initial company then merged with another company, resulting in the one that now exists. We became the Number 1 in the mobile game market in 2013.

I often start with an area in which I do not have experience. I then learn gradually and follow a trial and error approach. When I was in charge of training activities for the software company, I was just a beginner. I then became more senior and advanced to higher positions. During the process, I drew on my own knowledge and expertise for my current organisation. There is no common formula for success; hence, we need to be determined.

Participant 48

I currently work in steel manufacturing. My job is hard. I have to work in high temperatures, a noisy and dusty environment … I do my best to perform my job but I am also searching for a better job with a higher salary and better environment so that I can become settled in my life. I plan to get married and want to have my own house. Thus, I am making every effort to earn money.

Participant 71

I prefer to work in an English-speaking work environment. I graduated in 2008 and my English was very poor. Hence, I started to learn English. I worked for a steel house company for a year and practised English every day. The company then entered the wooden house market in Australia and I moved with them. After a year, I felt bored and moved to the UK.

I have worked for several companies. My major was in Irrigation. My dissertation was on new concrete construction technology. I worked for a hydropower plant for a year. I experienced a psychological crisis because I lived in a rural area. I wanted to work in a city. I then started to learn English and became one of the first employees in wooden house construction. Thus, I learnt to perform the job by myself and acquired new knowledge.

I worked for the Australian wooden house company for a year. However, I could not see my future there. My monthly salary was 6.3 million VND during the first year and 7.5 million VND during the second year. I moved to a high construction company, which matched my undergraduate studies. After 3 months, I wanted to renew myself and my friend introduced me to a UK wooden house company. Following a Skype interview, I was offered a totally different position with an $800 monthly salary.

Honestly, no one wants to work for so many companies. However, people do so because of the environment and their self-direction.

❖ Conscientiousness

The negative impact of work constraints is, however, weakened by conscientiousness.

Participant 3
The job is hard, sometimes I feel exhausted but I have chosen it, so I need to continue. I also apply these caring tasks to my family members. Because I am open-hearted, caring and supportive, I am able to do the job well. However, this job involves a lot of pressure, especially during the night shift.

If I could have a better job, I would like to have a fixed-time job which has no night shift, less pressure, a clean and fresh environment, a higher income, and stability.

Work support and benefits as reinforcing internal influences

The recursiveness and dynamics between individual and organisational actors is exemplified in this study by the influence one actor has on the role of another in individual career phenomena. In the previous section, individual perspectives were shown to moderate the effect of organisational characteristics. In this section, organisational characteristics moderate the role of individual determinants (Table 36).

Table 36 Work support and benefits as reinforcing internal influences

Work support and benefits as reinforcing internal influences
Participant 47 This job led me to become more active, more proactive. Because I am an only-child, my parents were over-protective, thus, I did not have opportunities to meet many people. Now, I recognise that I have completely changed. I am more confident; I feel like an eagle in the sky and able to take on any challenge and situation. I have no reason to change job. I love my current job. Moreover, it is part of my family assets, hence I am improving myself to inherit the family career. I think there will be no better fitting job than this one.

> **Participant 64**
> I moved to another company operating in the import-export area and built many relationships with customers. Quickly seizing opportunities, I opened my own factory.
> At the early stage of start-up, I faced many difficulties. Fortunately, I received support from many people. Firstly, my customers and partners offered me extremely good and stable prices. We trusted each other. Secondly, my successful friends gave me substantial help.

❖ **What can be learnt from data-theory interaction?**

Although the interdependence and interconnectedness between institutional and individual factors is mentioned in both the career ecosystem and system theory framework, the underlying mechanism needs to be explored and explained through empirical evidence. This is where existing career literature can learn from job design theory. For example, scholars in this school of thought advocate that the effects of work characteristics on outcomes are mediated by experience meaningfulness (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Humphrey, Nahrgang & Morgeson, 2007). The ultimate goal of human beings, according to self-determination theory, is to experience meaning in both work and non-work life (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Motivational work characteristics are therefore expected to promote meaningful development which involves setting and pursuing important goals, having autonomy, and receiving feedback from jobs (Humphrey et al., 2007). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) argued that job resources may act as both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. For instance, a willingness to successfully complete and achieve work tasks, contributing to employees' growth, learning and development, can be referred to as intrinsic motivation. Conversely, job resources that are an instrumental means of achieving work goals constitute an extrinsic motivation (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Regarding the interaction between work characteristics and personality, Oldham and Fried (2016) argued that personalities drive the response to work conditions. However, individual characteristics are also influenced by the motivational characteristics of work such as autonomy and discretion (Oldham & Fried, 2006). The reciprocal relationships between work characteristics and having a proactive personality were recently discussed by Li, Fay, Frese and Gao (2014). Their research shows that a proactive personality alters the work environment by broadening roles and increasing job demands, work control, job complexity, and self-direction (Li et al., 2014). These scholars also found that job demands and job control affect the development of a proactive personality.

The reciprocal relationship between proactive personality and work characteristics maintains the validity of the corresponsive principle which argues that personality traits lead people to engage in particular work experiences that, consequently, may further reinforce those traits (Roberts, Wood & Caspi, 2008). Moreover, according to Schaufeli and Taris (2014), the

incorporation of personal resources is an unresolved issue in the job demand-resource model. These scholars therefore proposed a new model that clarifies the distinct features of job demand and resources, integrating personal resources and proposing both positive and negative outcomes of the extended job demand-resource model.

Although previous research on job design has proposed such a reciprocal relationship between personalities and work characteristics, there is still a need to identify specific personality traits that are relevant to specific dimensions of work attributes (Oldham & Fried, 2016). The findings of this qualitative research therefore contribute in this regard by providing informative and empirical evidence that illustrates the dynamic interactions between these determinants of an individual career.

Overall the findings from this qualitative research provide contextualised and insightful interpretations of the world of work. To articulate a compelling story of contemporary individual careers in the Far East, it is necessary to rely on existing meta-frameworks in the literature. In light of the system theory framework (STF) of career development (Patton & McMahon, 1996, 2006, 2014) and career ecosystem frameworks (Baruch, 2015; Baruch et al., 2016; Baruch & Rousseau, 2018), this study advocates that individuals are the heart of career phenomena. They bring their personality, attitudes, values, and human capital to career (eco)system(s). They engage in and demonstrate different nuances of career management and interact with different dimensions of institutional boundaries such as work support and benefits, work requirements, and work constraints. The interaction, interdependence, and interconnectedness between individual and institutional actors are affected by social-environmental factors such as family and both labour and economic markets, offering real-life views of the career ecosystem framework and STF .

2.3.3   RQ3 Which career concepts and theories are most suitable to explain the above individual career phenomena?

A wealth of findings from this detailed qualitative study address key issues in the current career literature. By exploring 'exceptional but real' career phenomena, this study validates the meaning of theory-driven concepts such as the Protean, boundaryless career, Kaleidoscope career, career resources, employability, and career success although further interpretations are required. For example, the 'value-driven' element of the Protean career is often referred to as career goals in a normal career context. Occupational boundaries are critical aspects of the boundaryless career in an everyday context. A kaleidoscope career relates to the different goals individuals aim to pursue in their work and life (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).

Different career resources (Hirschi, 2012; Paradnike et al., 2016) are also mentioned. Among these resources, personalities are considered a crucial sources of different career scenarios. Key personalities in career development include proactivity (Li et al., 2014) and positivity (Newman et al., 2014). Additionally, the role of satisfaction as a key indicator of subjective success (Heslin, 2005) and the notion of employability as the likelihood to access or stay in a stable job (Heijde & van der Heijden, 2006) are also confirmed. However, closest to the heart of individual career phenomena is the concept of work characteristics. Hence, it is rational to conclude that the organisational career is still alive and well but needs redefinition (Clarke, 2013).

The central roles of work characteristics, career goals, personalities, and multi-directional relationships among career phenomena require an integrative and interdisciplinary explanation. The job demands-resources model, job design theory, agency theory, and self-determination theory were all found to be meaningful in explaining different perspectives on the dynamics of individual careers. For example, the job demands- resource model and job design theory highlight the importance of different elements of jobs as a feature of organisational career management or of individual careers. Self-determination theory and agency theory as well as proactivity and positive psychology constructs offer fresh insight into the internal mechanisms of individual careers such as goal, personality, and self-management resources.

Both the system theory framework and the career ecosystem framework may be useful for integrating different aspects of the dynamics of individual careers with relevant theories and concepts. However, I believe that each of these frameworks can learn from and contribute to the development of their counterpart. For example, STF can supplement its critical synthesis of career theories, implications, and practices (McMahon & Patton, 2018) with the career ecosystem. The career ecosystem, consequently, can incorporate contemporary career concepts and global landscape (Baruch, 2015) into STF. Together, these two meta-frameworks may lay the integrative, interdisciplinary, and multi-level foundation for further research on careers (Baruch, 2015; McMahon & Patton, 2018). Critically applying these frameworks to future research may therefore address the current fragmentation in the academic career field (Baruch et al., 2015).

Two critical issues arise in relation to the career ecosystem theory framework: (1) What do career actors bring to and do in the ecosystem?(2) How do these actors interact or interconnect with each other? These are clearly addressed and explained in this qualitative research. Regarding the first question, the participants in this study report that work characteristics (work support & benefits, work requirement, and work constraints) are the main institutional driving forces of their career. Furthermore, their goals (entrepreneurship, life-work congruence, subjective goal, objective goal, and goal ambiguity), personality (positivity, proactivity, conscientiousness, and

passivity), and other self-management resources (self-direction, occupational orientation, change resistance, indecisiveness, learning, networking, planning, opportunity taking, problem solving, capital mobilising, performance, commitment, and employability) determine how they will respond to the work environment. These empirically-evidence based explanations help to link classic and contemporary career theories and concepts (theory of content and theory of the process of career development, organisational career management, boundaryless career, protean career, career resources) with other relevant concepts and theories from other disciplines (job demands, job resources, proactivity, positive psychology, job design theory, and self-determination theory).

Regarding the second question, the inter and intra-relationships within and between career phenomena are reflected among the participants' narratives. Two prominent career actors/or systems in this respect are institutions and individuals. Interaction, interdependence, and interconnectedness take place within each actor and system. For instance, work supports and benefits along with work constraints are dual processes within work characteristics that lead to career dynamics. The associations between goals and personality, and between goals and self-management resources, also contribute to career dynamics. The linkages between career outcomes also result in various individual career scenarios. The multi-directional effects of work and individual characteristics both separately and in combination increase the variety of contemporary careers.

One shortcoming of this exploratory study, however, relates to its focus: exploring multiple pathways of individual careers. The merit of this emphasis is to allow the diversity of individual careers among diverse groups to be explored. The cost of this selection, however, is to identify similarities among people in relatively homogeneous groups. In addition, although the role of work characteristics has been highlighted in this study, employing an interpretative approach to capture institutional and individual relationships through semi-structured interviews may obscure significant nuances of these relationships. These drawbacks will be addressed in subsequent quantitative research.

2.4   Conclusion

This exploratory qualitative research aimed to explore prominent individual career phenomena and to search for relevant career theories and concepts that provide adequate explanations for such phenomena. Extensive semi-structured interviews were conducted with diverse groups of respondents. The findings derived from the narratives of respondents confirm the meaning of dominant career concepts such as the Protean career, the boundaryless career, employability, and career success. Less valued in contemporary careers but most frequently mentioned in this study is work environment/characteristics. The significance of institutional boundaries in the current

employment context is therefore re-established. Other meaningful concepts include career self-management and personalities. The dynamic interaction, interdependence, and interconnectedness of these career phenomena call for integrative and interdisciplinary interpretation. The career ecosystem framework, job demands-resources, agency, and self-determination theories are the critical theoretical foundations of this study. The quantitative research that will now follow will continue the story of this mixed-method thesis.

Chapter 3: Empirical tests of fresh perspectives on individual careers

This quantitative study examined important findings from the previous qualitative study. Specifically, the first three hypotheses assessed the interdependence and interconnectedness between the two predictors - work environment and Protean orientation; the mediator - employees' learning; and two outcomes - employability and organisational commitment. The final four hypotheses investigated the role of personality as a determinant of individual career phenomena, including boundaryless orientation as a mediator and employability and mobility as two outcomes. In the following sections, I will explain how Person–Environment fit, Self-determination theory and Job Design theory were used to provide the theoretical foundations for the research. This will be followed by sections explaining the data-driven development of the hypotheses, method, findings, and discussion. The chapter then concludes with key reflections.

3.1 Theoretical foundations

3.1.1 Structure and agency boundaries of career from an interdisciplinary perspective

Focusing entirely on either structure or agency aspects of careers will lead to an insufficient understanding (Duberley, Mallon & Cohen, 2006). Even for the most agentic careerists, structural factors play a significant role in their career trajectories and success (Guan et al., 2018). This quantitative research therefore examines the coexistence of structure and agency within the career context of manufacturing industries. Specifically, it tests causal relationships between agency and institution actors and their mechanism of mediation. This section begins with fundamental theory explaining the dynamics of agency and structure. Institutional and individual factors are then reviewed and examined. Finally, relevant arguments relating to the dynamic relationships among these variables are introduced.

3.1.1.1 Person–Environment fit

One of the most integral research topics in the study of organisational behaviour is Person-Environment (PE) fit (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Patton & McMahon, 2014). PE fit represents

the congruence, match, or similarity between person and environment (Edwards, Caplan & Van Harrison, 1998). PE fit theories assume that people look for and cultivate a favourable environment according to their particular characteristics. It therefore lays the groundwork for career choices, adjustment, and success. For example, PE fit has been associated with job satisfaction (Schaffer, 1953; Locke, 1976), job stress (French, Caplan & Van Harrison, 1982; McGrath, 1976), vocational choice (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Holland, 1997), recruitment and selection (Breaugh, 1992; Wanous, 1992; Werbel & Gilliland, 1999), and organisational culture and climate (Chatman, 1989; Meglino, Ravlin & Adkins, 1989; Schneider, 1987). The fit itself derives from ongoing interactions between individuals and their environment (Su, Murdrock & Rounds, 2015). PE fit theory therefore offers a dynamic approach to how individuals and their environment interact (Patton & McMahon, 2014; Tinsley, 2000).

PE fit has been classified as either complementary fit or supplementary fit (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005). Complementary fit occurs when an individuals' characteristics fill a gap in their environment. It contributes directly to employees' attitudes. For example, when their needs are satisfied, employees have more positive job attitudes (Locke, 1976). Supplementary fit occurs when individuals' manifest characteristics align with their environment. It has an indirect influence on employees' attitudes (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Thus, the process of need fulfilment is facilitated by interacting with similar people (Festinger, 1954).

Both complementary and supplementary elements connect with different fit dimensions. For instance, complementary fit is mainly associated with a person–job fit, while supplementary fit is associated with other types of fit, such as person–organisation fit and person–supervisor fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Person–job fit is denoted by demands–abilities fit, and needs–supplies or supplies–values fit (Edwards, 1991). A demands–abilities fit occurs when the knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees meet the requirements of their job. Conversely, a needs–supplies or supplies–values fit occurs if the job meets the needs, desires, or preferences of employees (Edwards, 1991). A person–organisation fit relates to the similarities between employees and their organisations in terms of individual personality/climate (Christiansen, Villanova & Mikulay, 1997), values (Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996; Verquer, Beehr & Wagner, 2003) and goals (Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991). Finally, a person–supervisor fit denotes a match between the values, personalities, and behavioural styles of both supervisors and employees (Van Vianen, Shen & Chuang, 2011). These dimensions of fit have moderate connections with each other and exert different outcomes on employees. In particular, a person–job fit has a stronger effect on job satisfaction and a weaker effect on organisational commitment than a person–organisation fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

According to Patton and McMahon (2014), the principle of person–environment fit, matching individuals with their world of work, has remained unchanged since the early work of Parson (1909). Several theorists have offered different interpretations of person–environment fit theories, such as Holland's theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environment (Holland, 1973, 1997) and Dawis and Lofquist's (1984) Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA). Because this study focuses on the dynamics of individual careers, the TWA is best suited to explaining how individuals navigate their career within their working environment.

Central to the TWA is the correspondence between the individual and his or her environment (Dawis, 2005). The TWA considers work to be the major environment within which individuals interact; hence, each individual does his/her best to achieve and maintain person–environment congruence.

Individuals have distinctive ways of transferring their abilities and needs onto the recursive relationships between themselves and other individuals. Dawis (2005) classified these needs into six main categories: achievement, comfort, status, altruism, safety and autonomy. Achievement emphasises ability, utility, and accomplishment, while comfort focuses on comfort, stress, and distress avoidance. Altruism is concerned with the well-being of others, while status advocates self-advancement and promotion. Finally, autonomy refers to an internal locus of control, whereas safety refers to a tendency towards an external locus of control.

Differences in these needs will result in different work/personality traits: celebrity, pace, rhythm, and endurance (Dawis, 2005). Celebrity refers to the speed and/or latency of individual responses and work behaviours. Pace relates to the intensity of individual responses and work performance. Rhythm indicates the typical patterns of individual responses and work effort. Endurance, as its name suggests, denotes the amount of time individuals invest in their work and their interaction with the environment (Dawis, 2005).

The predictive model for the TWA concentrates on a person's level of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with, and satisfactoriness (or unsatisfactoriness) of, the work environment (Dawis, 2005). If individuals and their work environment correspond, their needs and values are met, resulting in satisfaction with the working environment. Their skills and abilities also meet their job requirements, resulting in satisfactoriness of the work environment. High levels of satisfaction and satisfactoriness will lead to a state of equilibrium between individuals and their environment. By contrast, high levels of dissatisfaction and unsatisfactoriness will cause disequilibrium, calling for adjustments to be made to re-establish the equilibrium (Dawis, 2005).

The ways that these adjustments occur and are maintained are explained in the process model. Both individuals and the work environment may utilise four solutions to cope with

discorrespondence: flexibility, active adjustment, reactive adjustment, and perseverance (Dawis, 2005). Flexibility relates to the threshold of tolerance to discorrespondence. When the flexibility threshold is crossed, active and/or reactive adjustment will take place and each actor will act on the other and/or make self-adjustments to reduce the discorrespondence. If the discorrespondence does not decrease, perseverance will indicate the length of time each actor can continue with the discorrespondence before engaging in further action (Dawis, 2005).

Emerging career concepts carry the implications of PE fit theory into a contemporary context. For example, Inkson (2006) claimed that the Protean career metaphor represents a new way of thinking about the 'fit' and 'match' metaphor. In fact, the traditional fit metaphor focuses on the immutability of the environment and stability of individuals. By contrast, the Protean career metaphor emphasises both the changing of the context and the self-direction employees follow to ensure adaptability. In a similar vein, Baruch (2014) posited that Protean careerists fit better with the Protean and/or boundaryless context than the traditional environment. Briscoe and Hall (2006) argued that, in Protean and boundaryless career contexts, there are career profiles in which value congruence between employees and their organisation is preferred. Furthermore, a positive person/organisation fit is likely to ensure that employees stay with their organisations (Briscoe et al., 2006). The dynamic fit of a career with one's health, happiness, and productivity, constantly evolving over time, will form the bedrock of a sustainable career (De Vos, Van der Heijden & Akkermans, 2018).

3.1.1.2 Self–determination theory

According to Greguras and Diefendorff (2009), the influence of fit on employee outcomes is mediated by fulfilment of the need for autonomy, relatedness and competence, as explained by Self-determination Theory (SDT). This theory is a meta-theory of personality development and human behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2017). According to SDT, persistence, proactivity, and positivity are facets of human nature (Ryan and Deci, 2000). These individual features contribute to the developmental outcomes of individual–environment interactions. Understanding someone's personality may enable us to predict their causal orientations. For example, a person with greater personality integration may demonstrate higher autonomy orientation (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Positive human potential is brilliantly captured by intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, intrinsic motivation is not the only type of human motivation, as the opposite of intrinsic motivation is extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). From birth, humans intrinsically explore and master their inner and outer worlds by acting on their intrinsic motivation and internalising and

integrating extrinsic motivation with the self (Ryan & Deci, 2017). These intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are explained by the existence of an autonomy–control continuum. Intrinsic motivations relate to autonomous behaviours generated from oneself, while extrinsic motivations are associated with a wide range of controlled and autonomous behaviours (Ryan & Connell, 1989). More autonomously extrinsic motivations can be internalised and integrated into one's self, values, and beliefs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). At the end of the autonomy–control continuum is amotivation. Amotivation refers to passivity, ineffectiveness, and a lack of purpose, intention, and motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The developmental process co-exists with satisfaction in terms of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Specifically, competence relates to feelings of mastery and effectiveness; autonomy refers to navigating one's actions and experiences via one's authentic interests and values; and relatedness refers to the need to belong to and connect with the social world.

SDT emphasises the optimal development process and proximal satisfaction within dynamic interactions between individuals and their social contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Characterising social contexts by their levels of autonomy, effectance, and relationally supportive elements, SDT posits that a social environment demonstrating higher levels of such support will enhance effectiveness and contribute to optimal development. By contrast, an environment that manifests low levels of support will thwart individual satisfaction and result in ineffective operation and non-optimal development.

As a meta-theory, SDT comprises six mini-theories (Ryan & Deci, 2017), of which Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) will be referred to in this study as the centre of the argument. According to this theory, intrinsic motivation is made up of social psychology and perspectives on personality. The theory hence addresses each of these perspectives in depth. First, CET explains the ways in which the environment exerts an influence on intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). For instance, multiple circumstances are explained in which externally administered rewards such as tangible rewards, verbal rewards, controlling rewards, optimal challenge and rewards with a greater sense of engagement, autonomy, and choice may act as reinforcing or diminishing forces of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The effects of such rewards depend largely on the way that individuals interpret their meaning. Conversely, intrinsic motivation relies on the core aspects and unfolding nature of human beings. Ego involvement, internally controlled states, and other interpersonal contextual effects are also considered (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

SDT can be used in the context of career development, especially in explaining Protean and boundaryless career phenomena associated with autonomous forms of career choice (Forrier et al., 2009) and intrinsic motivations such as growth, development, and multi-skilling (De Vos et al.,

2018). For instance, the concept of a boundaryless career specifies the dynamics between individuals and their institutional environment by advocating the physical and psychological mobility of employees (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). The concept of a Protean career, on the other hand, interprets the autonomy-control continuum in terms of value-driven and self-directed dimensions of individual careers. Accordingly, four Protean career profiles are portrayed, based on high vs low levels of these two dimensions (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Moreover, building on the concept of SDT, De Vos and associates (2018) argued that proactive people require a supportive environment to pursue their sustainable careers.

Dahling and Lauricella (2017) also strived to highlight the input SDT makes to contemporary career knowledge. These authors argue that SDT helps us to understand the deep insights into career criteria that are missing in contemporary career literature. For example, the meta theory of human motivation explains different mechanisms of vocational processes and outcomes (Dahling & Librizzi, 2015). To demonstrate this, Dahling and Lauricella (2017) collected empirical data to test the relationships between autonomy and competence support and subjective success. These findings confirmed the merits of SDT in contemporary career disciplines.

Applying PE fit, SDT, and job design theory, this quantitative research examined how the dynamics of individual careers affected by institutional and individual determinants in manufacturing industry. In particular, model 1a investigated the interactions between work environment, Protean career orientation, and individual learning, all of which shape employees' outcomes, employability, and occupational commitment (see Hypotheses 1 to 3). Model 1b was concerned with the role played by individual characteristics (proactivity and positivity) as determinants of boundaryless career orientation, employability, and mobility (see Hypotheses 4 to 7). The rationale for developing these quantitative hypotheses is now discussed.

3.1.1.3. Job design theory

Over the past few decades, the discipline of job design has attracted special attention in the organisational sciences (Oldham & Fried, 2016). At its most basic level, job design refers to the opportunities and structural constraints of the job that employees accomplish and experience at work (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). The field of job design can be traced back to the earliest work of Babbage (1835) and Smith (1850). According to these scholars, job specialisation and simplification enable employees to develop job related skills and perform their tasks with care, enhancing their work efficacy (Oldham & Fried, 2016).

Promoting such ideas, Taylor (1911) introduced his scientific management philosophy which emphasised using standardised operations and job simplification to boost the productivity of work

systems. The main drawback of scientific management, however, is that it leaves little space for employee involvement and personal discretion (Lawrence, 2010; Oldham & Fried, 2016) and can lead to counterproductive behaviours such as tardiness and restricted productivity (Walker & Guest, 1952).

Among the evolutionary work that emerged later was the Two-factor theory of Herzberg (1966). According to Herzberg, employees require motivator job factors (or satisfiers) such as job enrichment, employee responsibility, achievement, competence development, recognition, and advancement to increase their work effectiveness and job satisfaction. Additionally, a job also involves hygiene factors such as company policies, supervision, salary, networks, and working conditions to keep employees from feeling unsatisfied. Although the validity of these two factors has been questioned in later studies, its crucial contribution was to highlight the importance of job enrichment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

Another theory that has emerged and been widely-researched since the 1970s is Job Characteristic Theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980). This theory focuses on employees' responses (job satisfaction, sickness absenteeism, personnel turnover) to jobs via the moderation of individual characteristics (Roberts & Glick, 1981). The five core job characteristics are skill variety, task significance, task identity, feedback, and autonomy. These are predicted to influence three psychological states of employees: experienced meaningfulness of the work, experienced responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of the results of work. These contribute to employee outcomes such as increased internal motivation, job satisfaction, and performance (Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980). Skill variety, task significance, and task identity positively relate to the experienced meaningfulness of the work; autonomy contributes to experienced responsibility: and feedback connects with knowledge of the results. Moreover, the effects of job characteristics are moderated by individual elements such as growth need strength, job relevant knowledge and skills, and work satisfaction (Oldham & Fried, 2016).

Classifying all job characteristics into two categories: job demands and job resources, advocates of Job Demands-Resources Theory (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011) provide a more dynamic framework for understanding the role of job design in the contemporary world of work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). For instance, job demands refer to work elements that require physical or psychological effort whereas job resources relate to work elements that enable employees to meet the demands of the job (Oldham & Fried, 2016) or are valued by employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

Job demands and job resources are arguably related to two different processes that affect employees' well-being and career outcomes. For example, job demands that consume energetic

resources lead to a process of health impairment that predicts exhaustion, psychosomatic heath complaints, and repetitive strain injury (Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2003). Conversely, job resources that fulfil basic psychological needs lead to a motivational process that predicts work engagement, motivation, and enjoyment (Bakker, Van Veldhoven & Xanthopoulou, 2010). As well as separate effects on outcomes, job demands and resources may also interact with each other, yielding more complicated phenomena (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). For example, job resources may reduce the negative effect of job demands whereas job demands may erode the motivational mechanism of job resources.

3.1.2 Dynamics of individual careers

Globalisation, technological development, new organisational structures, less-committed employment, and unpredictable career events have caused careers to become increasingly dynamic. Changes in career context require corresponding changes in job design (Hall & Heras, 2010). Careerists are expected to become proactive (Zeitz et al., 2009), demonstrate positive psychology (Hirschi, 2012), and commit to continuous learning (Hall & Mirvis, 1995; McMahon & Patton, 2018). Employability (Akkerman & Kubasch, 2017; Baruch et al., 2015) and mobility (Guan et al., 2018) have become the central topics of interest in contemporary career contexts and people now have reasons to commit to their occupations rather than their organisations (Cohen, 2007). All the dynamic features of individual careers will be investigated in this research.

3.1.2.2 Predictors and mediators of individual careers

Work characteristics

Narratives from respondents in the qualitative research implied linkages between job characteristics and individual career. Very few contemporary career studies have taken this direction. Indeed, Hall and Heras (2010) are among the pioneers in integrating job design (the research area for which the Job Demands-Resources model is a framework) into contemporary career literature.

According to these scholars, these disciplines often take different approaches to time (immediate vs lifetime) and make different methodological choices, yet all relate to individuals' work. Hence, there are several perspectives that make it feasible to integrate job design into contemporary career theory and vice versa (Hall & Heras, 2010). In this review, I will focus on connecting job design to contemporary careers. By establishing the longitudinal effects of job

characteristics on work outcomes such as performance and attitudes, a relevant career understanding can be obtained. In the same manner, examining the influences of job context over time will capture the main characteristics of career processes. Moreover, features of job design such as hierarchical advancement and appraisal, personal and network development, subjective success, and so on are also proposed to have an impact on adaptability and self-identity, crucial components of a contemporary career (Hall & Heras, 2010).

This argument nevertheless needs to be supported by empirical evidence. Thus far, Dahling and Lauricella (2017) have responded to the issue by investigating how job design may lead to subjective career success. This study extends this topic further by providing quantitative explanations for the effect of work characteristics on essential career aspects such as learning and employability.

Proactivity and positivity

Contemporary career models have relied on assumptions about the proactivity of careerists (Zeitz et al., 2009). However, what does proactivity mean and why is it important to the career discipline? The answers are provided in the following discussion.

Proactivity, according to Grant and Ashford (2008), refers to the actions employees take to affect themselves and/or their surrounding environment. More specifically, Parker and associates (2010) defined proactivity as 'making things happen, anticipating and preventing problems, and seizing opportunities'. These actions aim to induce future changes in oneself and one's work environment. Features of proactivity include proactive behaviours such as feedback-seeking and social networking; the subjects of intended impacts such as the self, others, and/or organisations; frequencies and timing of proactive behaviours; and the tactics, strategies and methods applied by employees (Grant & Ashford, 2008).

Proactivity is not a static state but an ongoing process (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker et al., 2010). According to Grant and Ashford (2008), the proactive process comprises three stages: anticipation, planning, and action directed towards a future impact. Conversely, Parker and associates (2010) consider proactivity to be a goal-driven process involving proactive motivational states (can do, reason to, and energised to), proactive goal generation, and proactive goal striving. Different antecedents and outcomes of proactivity are also proposed, providing integrative pictures of proactivity. However, within the scope of this study, only relevant relationships pertaining to proactivity are mentioned in the hypothesis development sub-section.

Psychological resources are one among four main career resources (Hirschi, 2012); however, few empirical studies have examined the direct links between these resources and individual career

phenomena. This quantitative research therefore fills this gap by testing the mechanism of causal relationships between psychological resources and career self-management. To pave the way for further discussion, I will discuss an integrative model of psychological capital introduced by Luthans and his colleagues (Luthans, Vogelgesang & Lester, 2006; Luthans, Avolio, Avey & Norman, 2007; Luthans, Norman, Avolio & Avey, 2008; Avey, Luthans & Jensen, 2009).

Most notably, these scholars advocated psychological capital as an umbrella for four positive psychological sources of development: self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience. Building on Bandura's (2002) social cognitive theory, self-efficacy refers to confidence in one's performance, generated from an individual's motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Optimism relates to outcome expectations (Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 2001). Hope is expressed in terms of agency or goal-directed energy and pathways (Snyder, Sympson, Ybasco, Borders, Babyak & Higgins, 1996). Resilience indicates an individual's ability to cope with adversity, uncertainty, risk, or failure and to manage changing and stressful demands in life (Masten & Reed, 2002; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Individuals who demonstrate high levels of positive psychology are better at utilising goal-directed energy, adaptability, controlling outcomes, addressing challenges and difficulties, and goal accomplishment than those with lower levels of positive psychology (Newman et al., 2014).

In this study, the potential impact of proactivity and positivity on boundaryless orientation, employability, and commitment were examined.

Protean and boundaryless career orientation

In more liquid and less stable societies, the old psychological contract of employment that implicitly refers to advancement and seniority has become less valid (Arthur, Inkson & Pringle, 1999; Hall, 2002; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Such traditional norms of career also resulted in an 'unhealthy dependence' on organisations (Arnold & Cohen, 2008). Nowadays, careerists are more independent in accumulating relevant skills and knowledge and balancing work and personal life, leading to the emergence of the Protean and boundaryless careers (Arnold & Cohen, 2008). Put simply, these career terms capture different career scenarios that do not follow traditional bureaucratic norms (Briscoe & Hall, 2006).

As already discussed in the qualitative chapter, my focus on Protean and boundaryless careers was designed to raise issues relevant to this quantitative research. First, the boundaryless and the organisational career are not dichotomies but different reflections of the interactions between individuals and their organisations, between enabling and constraint factors (Arnold & Cohen,

2008). Second, the permeability of the boundaryless career does not lead to the boundaryless world of work but to other salient boundaries (Gunz, Evans & Jalland, 2000). Third, while boundaryless career concepts are more instrumental and market-oriented, Protean careers are more psychologically sensitive and subjective-focused (Arnold & Cohen, 2008). Fourth, due to an over-emphasis on individualism, both Protean and boundaryless career concepts fail to account for social institutional roles in career development (Arnold & Cohen, 2008).

The present quantitative research tackles these problems by including both institutional and individual factors, reflecting the different boundaries and mechanisms of individual career phenomena. Furthermore, it purposefully tests the effects of Protean and boundaryless careers on different outcomes. For instance, a Protean career orientation was hypothesised to affect learning, commitment, and employability whereas a boundaryless career orientation was hypothesised to influence mobility and employability.

Learning

In the theory of process section presented earlier, I discussed classic thoughts on career stages that were the results of interactions between an individual and his or her environment. In the contemporary view on career stages, learning is the driving force of career cycles (Hall, Mirvis, 1995). For instance, given the shortened cycle of technologies and products, employees are expected to satisfy the changing skill demands of work. During the process of moving in and out across different product lines, technologies, work groups, organisations, and workplaces, people will engage in different short-cycle learning stages. Continuous learning therefore lies at the heart of individual career development (McMahon & Patton, 2018). It occurs 'just in time' during the work process, relates to real work, and enables employees to experience autonomy, real-world challenges, and empowers them through skill development and a changing identity (Hall & Mirvis, 1995).

In line with this argument, a mediation mechanism of learning on the causal relationships between work characteristics, Protean orientation, and occupational commitment and employability was posited.

3.1.2.3 Outcomes of individual careers

Employability

Responding to a turbulent labour market characterised by a flatter structure, short-term unemployment, and skill obsolescence, enhancing employability has become a concern shared among employees and employers (Hallier, 2009). For employers, employability is considered an alternative reward to promotion and security (Hallier, 2009). For employees, maintaining and enhancing their own attractiveness to potential recruiters are key goals in contemporary career conditions (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Hence, they are motivated to engage in multi-directional career paths as opposed to a single path (Baruch, 2004), leading to the dynamics that exist in their careers. Having already discussed employability in the previous chapter, I will now present two other relevant perspectives on individual career dynamics: mobility and occupational commitment.

Mobility

The fragmented, discontinuous, uncertain, and unpredictable nature of contemporary career means that mobility plays a central role in career development (Forrier et al., 2009). Career mobility denotes moving from one position to another (Chudzikowski, 2012). Ng, Sorensen, Eby and Feldman (2007) classified six types of organisational mobility: internal vs external upward, internal vs external lateral, and internal vs external downward. According to Ng and associates (2007), internal and external upward mobility are associated with promotion from current or new employers; internal and external lateral mobility refers to job changes at a similar level of work in the current or new organisation; and internal and external downward mobility results from the intersection between constituencies of system – individuals, organisations, and society. Such mobility depends on what people bring to the labour market, including competencies, aspirations, values, and what they actually do (Baruch, 2004). The fit with context – organisational and societal – is a critical factor. These types of mobility appear to be an outcome of the interplay between individual factors (human capital, social capital, self-awareness, adaptability, personality traits, career interests, values, and attachment styles) and structural factors (economic conditions, societal characteristics, industry differences, and organisational staffing policies) (Forrier et al., 2009; Ng et al., 2007).

Regrettably, empirical evidence for the dynamics of mobility is partial, inconsistent (Inkson et al., 2012; Rodrigues et al., 2016), and primarily based on managers and professionals working in Western work environments.

Occupational commitment

Commitment at work has long been a key research topic for scholars in different fields (Blau, 2001, 2003; Cohen, 2007; Lee, Carswell, & Allen, 2000). Commitment can be displayed in several forms, such as work ethic, organisational commitment, career commitment, and job involvement (Morrow, 1983; 1993). Among these multiple dimensions of workplace commitment, organisational commitment has accounted for the majority of research in this area (Cohen, 2007). However, dramatic changes in the workplace such as restructuring, job insecurity, new psychological contracts, and temporary workforces have shifted the commitment from organisations to occupations (Blau, 2001, 2003; Cohen, 2007). Moreover, the popularity of organisational commitment is somewhat influenced by Western culture where the organisation is the crucial work unit (Cohen, 2007); it may be irrelevant in a different culture. In addition, for highly educated individuals, their qualifications and education are the main determinants of their career decisions (Cohen, 2007). This phenomenon was also raised by participants in my qualitative study. For the reason discussed, occupation commitment was therefore included as a part of individual career dynamics in this quantitative study.

Although the terms occupation, profession, and career are often used interchangeably in the literature (Blau, 2001; Lee et al., 2000), I employ occupational commitment so that it is consistent with previous clarifications given in the qualitative study. Moreover, given the research context, occupation can refer to both professionals and non-professionals (Lee et al., 2000). The term career is avoided to prevent any confusion with the type of career commitment mentioned in the previous chapter.

3.1.2.4. Interaction and interdependences among career phenomena

The present quantitative study is one of the few research studies on careers to examine the direct influence of Protean career attitudes on employees' perceived employability (Lo Presti et al., 2018). It predicted that people with a high Protean career attitude will choose either to develop their employability within their existing organisation, or move across organisational boundaries (Lin, 2015). Focusing on individual values and chasing developmental opportunities, Protean employees are deemed to have high employability (Eby, Butts & Lockwood, 2003; De Vos and Soens, 2008; Lin, 2015; Lo Presti et al., 2018). Regardless of the internal or external path of employability, Protean careerists commit to their own career and occupation (Wang, Olson & Shultz, 2013). Occupational commitment is an important aspect of individuals' multiple loyalties in the workplace (Lee et al., 2000; Clarke, 2013). Stressing that little attention has been paid to this

concept, Lo Presti et al. (2018) demonstrated the significant role of occupational commitment for careerists, especially freelancers.

According to De Vos, De Hauw and Van der Heijden (2011), organisational factors as well as individuals should be considered to understand the determinants of employability. In fact, the intrinsic job element enables employees to develop their own competence, contributing to the psychological aspects of perceived employability. Indeed, participation in and perception of organisational support for competency development are a means to increase employees' perceived employability (De Vos et al., 2011). At the same time, the extrinsic job element facilitates upward mobility, which is seen as a type of employability (Hetty van Emmerik et al., 2012).

Protean careerists are expected to adopt continuous learning and adapt to any work changes (London & Smither, 1999; Hall, 1996; Hall & Moss, 1998). The prediction that follows from this, confirmed by Clarke (2009), is that a high level of Protean orientation is often associated with career development through engagement in more complex and novel duties and by making mistakes and learning from them (Sujan, Weitz & Kumar, 1994). Briscoe and associates (2006) noted that, even though Protean careerists often demonstrate mobility and learning orientations, these are not elements of the Protean career.

The work environment, including social support and situational constraints, has long been explained as a predictor of employees' learning attitudes and development activities (Noe & Wilk, 1993). While social support from supervisors and co-workers creates positive learning attitudes and perceptions, situational constraints cause negative perceptions and attitudes (Noe & Wilk, 1993). Supporting employee learning and development does not, however, always lead to favourable outcomes. For instance, people who have a low learning orientation are not attracted to the organisational learning culture (Maurer & Lippstreu, 2008).

Work-related learning is proposed as a critical source of individual employability (Lin, 2015). In the contemporary career context, employability is a function of learning, adaptability, and crossing organisational boundaries (Scholarios et al., 2008). Nevertheless, few research studies have examined the relationship between learning and employability (De Vos et al., 2011). Moreover, employability scholars continue to pay more attention to individuals than institutional aspects of learning (De Vos et al., 2011). For example, Seijts, Latham, Tasa and Latham (2004) and Lin (2015) stated that individuals' learning goals contribute to high employability through the acquisition and mastering of new skills in different organisational contexts.

However, previous research has also shown that the developmental aspects of a job may contribute to employee development and high employability (DeRue & Wellman, 2009; Van der Heijden et al., 2011). Therefore, several scholars (Forrier & Sels, 2003; Heijde & Van der Heijden,

2006; De Vos et al., 2011) have advocated that an integrated approach to competency development, including the efforts of both individual and institutional actors, will lead to enhanced employability. Although under-studied in the current literature (see Potgieter, Coetzee & Ferreira, 2016 for an exception), the effect of learning on occupational commitment was mentioned in the first qualitative study. For instance, participants preferred to perform a job that matched either their formal learning or their passion.

The role of personality in individual career management, especially a boundaryless career orientation, employability, and mobility, has been emphasised by several career scholars (Eby et al., 2003; Ng et al., 2007; Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). While most attention has focused on the traditional Big Five traits, this study is the first to explore the effects of two features of meta-personality – proactivity and positivity (Orkibi & Brandt, 2015; Presbitero, 2015) – on boundaryless orientation, employability, and mobility.

The link between proactive personality and employability has been highlighted by several career scholars. Job seekers with proactivity demonstrate their commitment to competency development when searching for employment and are likely to get a job (Brown, Cober, Kane, Levy & Shalhoop, 2006; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe & Hall, 2007). Within organisational contexts, proactive employees make contributions to their organisations, develop relationships with colleagues, and receive reinforcement, favourable assessment, training, and development that, consequently, enhances their employability (Guilbert et al., 2016; Li, Liang & Crant, 2010). The association between proactivity and mobility, however, is rarely mentioned in the literature (see Fuller and Marler, 2009 for an exception) yet was mentioned by interviewees in Qualitative study. In particular, some participants argued that their proactive personality enabled them to achieve upward mobility, leave unfit organisations, get a new job, or transfer to self-employment.

The way in which positive personality contributes to individual career paths is unclear in the existing career literature (Orkibi & Brandt, 2015). In the recall narratives of participants in Qualitative study, positivity is explained as contributing to employability and mobility. Indeed, when people have a positive self-view, environmental assessment, and hope for the future, they are more willing to learn, to move, to change, and to adapt to their working environment, enhancing their competence and marketability.

The early notion that a boundaryless career orientation may result in confidence in employability was discussed by Sullivan and Arthur (2006). However, few scholars have provided any further insight into this relationship. The research of Lo Presti and associates (2018) appears to be the first to offer empirical evidence, showing that a boundaryless orientation can predict

individuals' perceived employability. By contrast, mobility has been central to boundaryless research (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009).

While a boundaryless career orientation and mobility preferences are considered to be two elements of the boundaryless career concept (Briscoe & Hall, 2006), participants in the qualitative study implied a cause-effect relationship between a boundaryless mindset and mobility preference. Additionally, Wiernik and Kostal (2015) reported that, while the Protean career orientation and boundaryless career orientation were interrelated, mobility preference tended to be a separate construct. Hence, in this research, I considered boundaryless orientation to be a predictor of mobility preference. Although the effects on a boundaryless orientation of proactivity (Fuller & Marler, 2009) and positivity have been virtually unexplored, it is logical to assume from the standpoint of self-determination that a positive and proactive personality can contribute to a boundary-crossing preference.

3. 1.3   Research questions

I begin this section with the career stories of two participants. The first, participant 28, is a top-tier employee of a big bank in Vietnam. She enjoys her organisation as well as her work. She manages her own career across organisations, emphasises both subjective and objective career success, and appreciates ongoing learning. She is confident of her employability and satisfied with her current employment. All in all, she provides a good example of a sparkling Protean career (Table 37).

Table 37: Career narrative of participant 28

> **Participant 28**: Graduating in 1995, I worked as a lecturer at a famous university and as a freelance interpreter for international conferences. In my first two conferences, I worked with a more senior interpreter. They obtained my contact information and informed me of other opportunities. My networks in the interpreting occupation have since been expanded. My current customers are international organisations, Ministries in Vietnam, and NGOs.
>
> I am an in-house interpreter for this bank. My motivation to work here is to expose the incomplete development of the private sector in Vietnam. If I do not work here, I will not witness the pressures they experience. This bank needed to pay four months' salary to a head-hunter to recruit me. I do not publicise my CV so that I do not have to refuse unsuitable jobs. Interviews for this job are normally conducted by the HR Manager; however, the President interviewed me. They do not feel I am too demanding when negotiating income and benefits. There are not many

people with similar competences for them to choose from. I have other alternatives: if I do not work here, I will work for another organisation.

For this senior position, after four days, I needed to perform as well as people with three years working experience. The higher your position, the more precarious your employment. The top 50 people here have the same mind-set. We are not thinking too much about the next five years. Instead, we focus on our current performance so as to prepare for the future.

My daily work changes every day because I need to attend different meetings covering different topics. I am able to update new products and services before they are launched onto the market. Vietnam is a developing country; we may be the first to update things that foreigners bring to this country.

Interpreting is a kind of freelance job. For each task, you will work with a different co-worker. You do not have any boss but other people in interpreting networks will know who the best performers are. You need to learn from other people and practice self-learning.

The second, participant 12, is an entrepreneur. His company has expanded significantly across the country. However, at the beginning of his start-up, he encountered extraordinary difficulties. His internal strength, rather than external forces, enabled him to revive and develop his business. Cited among his internal factors are proactivity, positivity, and a boundaryless orientation. These individual determinants not only contributed to his current success as an entrepreneur but also his previous success as an employee. In fact, he used to move across organisations and received job offers from different employers. His story is summarised in Table 38.

Table 38: Career narrative of participant 12

Participant 12: I aim aiming to become an entrepreneur but my start was as a paid employee. Running a successful business requires favourable individual and contextual factors. If you are not highly competent, you need to sharpen your competence and accumulate necessary resources or you will end in failure.

I worked in Danang for two months and my mom was ill. We moved to Hanoi to ensure good treatment for my mom. I worked in the Marketing Department of an A corporation for six months, was then promoted to Head of Marketing Department for six months, and finally was promoted to Regional Business Manager. After two years, I returned to Danang because it was the right time to leave.

I fitted in well with every organisation. I had never felt a misfit. I did not have time to care about the fit. I just focused on giving a good performance. I became the sales employee with the second highest revenue after six months working for company D. After another six months,

I became the sales employee with the highest revenue. My co-workers wondered why my boss rewarded me with a new laptop. I knew that he understood my efforts to go beyond his expectations.

During my time at company D, I and my friends opened this company. However, we failed because of our dispersion. I incurred a big debt to keep the brand of the company. Thinking positively, I started again with two tables and two chairs. This failure was one of my hardest lessons. My previous employer suggested that I should return to his company with a high salary but I did not. The starting up process is very challenging.

These career narratives seem to be typical cases of contemporary careerists. However, both participants 12 and 28 are well-educated people working in dynamic environments. In this quantitative research, I wanted to examine the two cases mentioned above in a larger sample with professionals and non-professionals working in manufacturing industries. The study therefore aimed to address the following questions:

- To what extent do work characteristics affect individual career phenomena in manufacturing industry?
- To what extent do individual factors affect individual career phenomena in manufacturing industry?

3.1.4   Data-driven hypothesis development

Of importance to mixed-method research is the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell & Clark, 2017). In previous chapter, transformation of qualitative data into quantitative data (Flick, 2014) was applied to identify the most popular individual career phenomena. This technique, however, may transmute qualitative findings to quasi-quantitative findings (Hopf, 1982). Based on theoretically grounded interpretation of qualitative findings, thus, quantitative hypotheses were developed.

Table 39: Career narrative of participant 6

Participant 6: When I decided to work here, I wanted to work in Vietnam but receive a salary that was equivalent to an international range. Additionally, I was able to manage everything by myself, including tasks that I did not know about such as administrative procedures, registering for domestic and overseas operations, liaising with investment departments, opening and managing international bank accounts, and so on. The director trusted me, assigned the job, and only checked the final results. Thus, I had to know everything to operate the company, except

for setting the directions for overseas operations. However, I interacted directly with overseas staff, contributed to their performance, and became a valuable member of personnel. The reason why I didn't move to different companies regardless of their offers was because I prefer to be a wild chicken than a farmed chicken. I eat when I want to, sleep when I went to, lay eggs when I want to, and my meat is recognised as tastier.

While learning has been perceived as the key to success and an organisational career has been considered less relevant in contemporary careers (Hall & Mirvis, 1995; Hall, 2002; Hall, 2004; McMahon & Patton, 2018), scholars in the field of job design have advocated work design as a crucial means of employee development (Frese & Zapf, 1994; Parker, 2014). For instance, Cheetham and Chivers (2001) argued that workplace learning makes an essential contribution to the development of employees' professional competence. According to Weiss (1990), work experience results in learning, leading to a relatively permanent change in knowledge or skills. Such experience was clarified by Taris and Kompier (2004) as empowering employees to execute all steps in the action process and use all levels of regulation in the face of broad and complex work demands that comprise unexpected situations, novelty, autonomy, and the need to seek different solutions and strategies (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby & Herron, 1996; McCauley, Van Velsor & Ruderman, 2010; Taris & Kompier, 2004). When employees engage with these experiences, they are more likely to practice and extend their capabilities, leading to the further enhancement of employability (Van der Heijden & Bakker, 2011). Van der Heijden, Gorgievski and De Lange (2016) proposed that employees' employability is a function of both workplace characteristics and individual learning behaviours and are therefore among the few researchers to empirically test the above argument. This study entered the discussion by examining the mediating role of learning on the relationship between work characteristics and employability.

H1: Learning mediates the relationship between work characteristics and employability.

Table 40: Career narrative of participant 24

Participant 24: I need autonomy at work. I want to be a subordinate of nobody and nobody is my subordinate. I just find myself fitting in well with the financial industry. I do what I like and no one controls me. When the stock market was booming in 2007, several companies invited me to work for them but I did not accept because they were not what I expected for my career. Before that, I engaged in international investment market in 2005. This involved keeping track of the status of foreign securities, the fluctuation of gold and oil transactions, bond markets, stock markets, currency. Each has different investment characteristics but they still connect to others.

> I never make surfing investments. We need to have basic investment knowledge. Buying and selling in a short time or surfing is costly, often losing money. I have my own long-term investment strategy with detailed transaction plans and investment tactics for making any specific transaction affecting the sustainable profitability of my investment.

A Protean career attitude, portrayed as a value-driven career orientation and self-directed career management, is believed to be closely related to employability (Lin, 2015). Protean careerists, using their own values and personal meaning to navigate their career, are likely to either deeply engage with their organisations or pursue career opportunities outside organisational boundaries, thus ensuring their employability (Clarke, 2009; Lin, 2015; Zafar & Mat, 2012). Several scholars have pointed out that a value-driven orientation and self-directed career management urges Protean careerists to move, psychologically and physically, across organisations (Hall, 1996; Hall & Moss, 1998). These careerists also proactively acquire transferable career competencies to enhance their internal and external employability through learning mechanisms (Li, 2015). For employees, learning is a means of ensuring their adaptability at work (Onstenk, 1997). Learning also enables them to acquire new work experience and open up professional development opportunities (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). In light of this school of thought, this study proposed that:

H2: Learning mediates the relationship between Protean career orientation and employability.

The linkage between Protean career attitude and organisational commitment has often been cited in contemporary career literature. Less attention, however, has been paid to the association between a Protean career and occupational commitment (see Lo Presti et al., 2018 for exception). According to these scholars, people with a strong Protean career attitude, when responding to the chaos of the labour market and weak and multiple organisational ties, increased their loyalty to their occupations rather than their organisations. Occupational commitment, in turn, has been found to be positively associated with learning motivation and transfer (Cheng & Ho, 2001). Colarelli and Bishop (1990) have suggested that people who commit to their occupation have a high motivation to learn so that they acquire new knowledge and develop high level skills while remaining in their chosen career. These arguments along with the previous qualitative findings led me to formulate the following hypothesis:

H3: Learning mediates the relationship between Protean career orientation and occupational commitment.

Table 41: Career narrative of participant 68

Participant 68: After graduation, I luckily got job offers from companies to which I applied. Although my academic performance was just about satisfactory, during the interview employers realised my enthusiasm, dynamic nature, and openness to learn, offering me chances to be their employee. My first company was the one that recruited me and my girlfriend. I did not have the intention to work there but my girlfriend did and so we both worked there. My second company required candidates with good English proficiency because of their foreign customers; however, at that time my English was extremely bad. I told them my weakness during the interview but affirmed that I would be able to perform my tasks well. Other applicants needed to take an English test whereas I did not. During the time I worked there, I was willing to do anything from miscellaneous to important tasks. English was my challenge at first, but I learnt quickly and dealing with foreign customers gradually became easier. My boss understood my work effort sand allowed me to take charge of larger bidding projects and I handled them quite well. After a year I was promoted to be Deputy Division, then Vice President of our Labour Union and my contribution and position were recognised.

It is commonly accepted in the contemporary career literature that the responsibility for career management and employability has been transferred from employers to employees (Clarke & Patrickson, 2008). This dominant view has been enacted in line with the decline of traditional careers and the emergence of new career forms such as a boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Arthur et al., 2005; Hall, 1996). The underlying assumption of a boundaryless career is that contemporary careerists are responsible for their own career and employability, which benefits them in at least two ways (Clarke & Patricksan, 2008). First, employability becomes an alternative to employment security which gradually degrades because of weakening employer-employee ties. Second, employability itself may be a source of job satisfaction and self-fulfilment through learning and development motivation (Clarke & Patrickson, 2008). Thus, a positive relationship between employability and boundaryless career attitude was expected in this quantitative research.

Of particular interest was the mediating role of a boundaryless career attitude on the relationship between proactivity (or proactive personality) and employability. In fact, the association between proactivity and a boundaryless orientation is well documented in the literature (Briscoe et al, 2006; Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019). The connection between proactivity and employability, however, is more complex. For instance, Fugate and Kinicki (2008) argued that employability is a second-order construct and introduced career proactivity as an element of employability. However, I have learnt from the previous qualitative research that

employability was understood as a single construct by participants and that proactivity may increase employability by enhancing work performance and career mobility.

A similar pattern may also be anticipated for the mediation role of a boundaryless career attitude on the proactivity-mobility relationship. Indeed, mobility has been considered as a proxy for a boundaryless career (Briscoe et al, 2006). Proactive personality, meanwhile, has been proposed as a kind of know-why competency that, in turn, is predicted to result in psychological and physical mobility (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Based on the above reasoning, I proposed that:

H4: Boundaryless career orientation mediates the effects of proactivity on employability.

H5: Boundaryless career orientation mediates the effects of proactivity on mobility.

Table 42: Career narrative of participant 7

Participant 7: As a freelance, I am able to decide whether to work or not, considering the pros and cons. I may work from early morning to midnight. Of importance for a makeup artist is their skilfulness, which is not easily recognised among paid employees. I used to work for a private company. Even if I did not achieve a good sales volume, I still received a fixed salary. This does not happen when you become a freelancer. I need to tackle difficulties. So, to attract and keep regular customers, I need to share stories that are of interest, encouraging them to connect and interact with me more frequently. Besides, I give them vouchers to increase the likelihood of being remembered and motivating them to return. I also try to surround them with different social means. So far, good luck contributes a little to what I have now. Efforts and can-do attitude make the most contribution. Although the future is not ours to see, I am confident that I will still have some jobs to do in the worst situation. Thinking positively, I am happy with my current career. I feel more satisfied now than my previous time working as a full-time employee.

Rarely mentioned in career literature are the direct relationships between positivity (positive psychology) and employability and mobility. No previous study has examined the indirect relationships between positivity and the two outcomes via a boundaryless career attitude. The narratives of participants in the qualitative study, however, gave a strong hint about such associations. Although the direct linkages between positivity and a boundaryless career attitude, employability, and mobility have not previously been mentioned, connections were reported between elements of positivity and the remaining variables. For example, a boundaryless career orientation correlates with self-efficacy (Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019) and resilience (Lyons, Schweitzer & Ng, 2015).

The connections between dimensions of positivity and employability are more complex. For example, Fugate and Kinicki (2008) argued that resilience is a component of employability. Some scholars consider self-efficacy and employability to be interchangeable whereas others argue that these two concepts are separate and that employability results in self-efficacy or vice versa (Berntson, Naswall & Sverke, 2008). Regarding relationships between positivity and mobility, it has been documented in the literature that each element of positivity and the construct as a whole

have negative associations with turnover and/ or intention to quit (Avey, Luthans & Yousself, 2010; Siu, Cheung & Lui, 2015). In fact, optimistic people are more likely to engage in self-career management, challenging endeavours, face obstacles, and are less likely to become 'quitters' (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Resilient people find it easier than others to adapt to and recover from setbacks and remain with their organisation (Siu, Cheung & Lui, 2015). A higher level of hope capacity will yield higher chances of success, reducing turnover intentions (Avey, Luthans & Yousself, 2010). Those higher in self-efficacy are more able to cope with their work demands, motivating them to stay (Siu, Cheung & Lui, 2015). These findings, however, are contradicted by the qualitative findings in which positivity was found to positively relate to mobility. One potential explanation for this is that positive participants in the qualitative research were boundaryless careerists characterized by their tendencies towards physical and psychological mobility (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Therefore, it was important to test the following hypotheses:

H6: Boundaryless career orientation mediates the effects of positivity on employability.

H7: Boundaryless career orientation mediates the effects of positivity on mobility.

3.2   Research methodology

3.2.1   Methodology

According to Patton and McMahon (2014), career research has been attached to a positivist worldview since the initial work of Parsons (1909). The use of positivism as the underlying philosophical foundations of the career field, however, has been challenged by contemporary career scholars (Arthur, 2008; Savickas, 2007; Schein, 2007). These scholars argue that relying on such a methodological tradition may prevent the emergence of fresh perspectives on careers. For instance, Schein (2007) criticised the overuse of statistical techniques in popularising several career constructs.

The application of the positivist paradigm in this study, however, takes advantage of the traditional merits of positivism while addressing the reasonable concerns of contemporary career scholars. Thus, developed from the previous qualitative findings, the nature of individual career phenomena as well as their statistical meaning were prioritised in this research.

The survey method was selected for the quantitative research as it offers a more advanced method of data collection and analysis than other sources (Fowler, 2013). Furthermore, a special purpose survey allows researchers to collect tailored information that is not currently available elsewhere (Fowler, 2013). The use of a probability sampling technique also helps to reduce the

probability of a biased sample while increasing the likelihood of precise statistical estimation and inferences from the population (Fowler, 2013; Scheaffer, Mendenhall, Ott & Gerow, 2011). The standardised procedure of a purposive survey enables researchers to access comparable and meaningful information for statistical analysis (Fowler, 2013).

Survey procedures, the main determinants of survey data, comprise three salient aspects: sampling, question design, and mode of data collection (Fowler, 2013; Scheaffer et al., 2011). Sampling involves selecting a representative group from the whole population by giving each member of the population an equal chance of being selected. Designing questions that are well-understood and yield meaningful answers is also an essential step in the survey process. An optimal mode of data collection facilitates the collection of high-quality data at the most reasonable cost.

The quality of surveys, however, varies from design to design (Fowler, 2013). The underlying reason for this is that researchers fail to follow an optimal design that properly addresses the three main areas of the survey. It is likely that researchers give higher priority to one aspect and neglect the others (Fowler, 2013). For example, a very large sample cannot compensate for a poorly designed survey and/or a low response rate. Hence, a total design was produced for the current survey. In fact, the design comprised an optimal solution that took into account remarkable elements.

To establish a high level of credibility for the survey data, the following decisions were taken. In terms of sampling, two sources of error needed to be properly controlled: errors of non-observation and errors of observation. Non-observation errors involve a low level of fit between the sample frame and the population, and critical non-respondents. Crucial observation error relates to the incorrect measurement issue. To deal with these errors, I employed the practices outlined below.

The sample frame in this study consisted of workers from selected organisations operating in manufacturing industries (rubber, fishing, and wood-processing companies). The minimum sample size for statistical inferences was calculated using the following formula (Saunders et al., 2016): $n = p\%\mathrm{x}q\%\mathrm{x}\left[\frac{z}{e\%}\right]^2$ in which *n* denotes the minimum sample size; *p%* the percentage belonging to the specified category; *q%* the percentage not belonging to the specified category; *z* the z value corresponding to the level of confidence required; and *e%* the margin of error required. Because confirmatory factor analysis was used, more than 200 cases were needed. The randomness requirement of statistical estimation was achieved through probability sampling: specifically, simple random sampling, which selects participants in such a way that each sample has the same probability of selection.

Non-response poses considerable threats to survey quality. It may be a result of failing to approach participants, failing to engage participants with the survey, or failing to obtain answers from participants (Fowler, 2013; Scheaffer et al., 2011). Although there is no reliable data about credible response rate, it is generally believed that a high non-response rate may lead to significant bias. If non-response items account for less than 5%, then non-response error does not raise much concern. However, if the percentage of non-response items is high, it may lead to significant biases. In this study, I took care to only include questions that almost every participant had sufficient information to answer and removed missing items from the analysis (Fowler, 2013; Scheaffer et al., 2011).

Measurement issues may also threaten the validity of survey findings (Bagozzi, Yi & Philips, 1991). Common method biases are considered to be the main features of measurement error (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). They are of particular concern when self-reported questionnaires are the only source of data, as they may result in false internal consistency through the inflation of apparent correlations between dependent and independent variables (Chang, Van Witteloostuijn & Eden, 2010; Podsakoff et al., 2003). Common method biases may be generated from four factors: common source of respondents, item characteristics, item context, and measurement context (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Such biases, however, vary and are subjected to different interpretations in the literature (Chang et al., 2010). For example, unlike the above-mentioned scholarly interpretations of previous scholars, Conway and Lance (2010) argued that linking self-reported data with common method biases and viewing self-reports as inferior to other data collection methods are major misconceptions. Nevertheless, a justification for the use of self-reports is needed (Conway and Lance, 2010). Moreover, while statistical remedies for common method biases are recommended by some scholars (Podsakoff et al., 2003), they are challenged by others (Conway & Lance, 2010). Regardless of these differences, all scholars agree that carefully addressing the problems at the design stage is the best remedy (Chang et al., 2010; Conway and Lance, 2010; Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Therefore, this study sought to control common method biases by applying multiple remedies. Firstly, self-reports are deemed suitable for measuring subjective career phenomena (Conway & Lance, 2010) such as Protean and boundaryless career orientation, learning orientation, perceived personality, employability, occupational commitment, and mobility. Although work characteristics may be better examined by other sources, I emphasised the functionalist aspect of the work context as discussed by SDT; hence, a self-report questionnaire was used.

Secondly, to address potential biases arising from the item and measurement context, only validated scales with a high level of validity and reliability from previous research were used. In addition, the mediation roles of learning and boundaryless orientation were examined separately in two different research models: Model 1a for learning and Model 1b for boundaryless orientation. Moreover, data on the predictors of Model 1a and outcomes of Model 1b were collected in the first study. Data for the predictors of Model 1b and outcomes of Model 1a were gathered in the second study. The time lag between these two studies was three months. Moreover, a temporal, proximal, psychological, and methodological separation of measurement was followed when formatting the questionnaire templates.

Thirdly, a pilot test was conducted on 50 participants in one research organisation to identify and address any significant issues. Consequently, two prominent career phenomena reported in the previous chapter: performance and satisfaction, were excluded because of critical missing data (more than 30%), leaving the official questionnaires and research models with the remaining variables and items.

Several steps were employed before conducting the formal questionnaire (Fowler, 2013; Scheaffer et al., 2011). For instance, survey topics were derived from prominent individual career phenomena that had emerged from previous qualitative studies. By triangulating qualitative findings with relevant literature and consulting experts in the research area, we devised carefully selected measurements. Different combinations of question order and response options were compared to choose the one that was most effective. Furthermore, a pre-test of the survey was conducted to rectify any possible errors prior to implementing the actual survey.

3.2.2 Research context

Contemporary career literature has focused on interpreting career phenomena that link to knowledge flows (Arthur, 2008). In a knowledge-driven world (Arthur, 2008; Khapova & Arthur, 2011), it is important to explore the dynamic and uncertain aspects of careers. Such characteristics, nevertheless, more closely connect with high-tech than manufacturing industries. In fact, autonomy, mastery, adaptability, and technological changes often relate to high-tech industries. By contrast, embeddedness, reasonable stability, security, and rotation continue to exist in manufacturing industries (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2007). Therefore, I believed that a manufacturing industry would be a fruitful environment for exploring new nuances of individual career phenomena. This quantitative survey was therefore conducted in three manufacturing firms in Vietnam.

3.2.3   Research procedures

Rewards and incentives were employed for delivering and collecting questionnaires. Several HR staff in the research organisation were recruited as research collaborators. These staff were able to access the sample frame list and randomly select potential participants; they were also skilled in approaching and encouraging people to engage in the survey. To ensure the anonymity of respondents, two students were hired to assist with the data collection process. Introduced by HR officers, these students directly contacted, met, and then collected data from respondents. Apart from collecting data, these students also helped with data entry. Updated data was scanned to spot and control any emerging problems.

To ensure ethical responsibilities toward research participants were met, such as voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality anonymity, and privacy (Saunders et al., 2016), administrative practices were strictly followed. Firstly, potential respondents were provided with clear and accurate information about the research: its nature, objectives, procedures, potential benefits vs risks, and other information relevant to the survey. They then made their own decision as to whether to engage in the research. Their right to withdrawal, however, remained in place throughout the research. No private information was disclosed, and the names of participants were replaced by pseudonyms. Data was used for research purposes only and was kept in a password-protected computer (soft data) and a locked cabinet (paper-based data).

To eliminate the common method bias, the survey was undertaken in two stages, each involving separate processes of data collection (Figure 5). Eligible respondents were those attending all stages. The first stage of quantitative data collection focused on work characteristics, Protean orientation, learning employability, and occupational commitment. Questionnaires were distributed to 800 survey participants who were informed that they needed to participate in both studies to receive their gift voucher. Of the 800 surveys distributed, 549 were returned, an approximate 69% response rate. Three months after the first survey, participants completed the second round of questionnaires which collected data on proactivity, positivity, boundaryless orientation, employability, and occupational commitment. Of the 549 surveys distributed, 525 surveys were returned, a 96% response rate. Fortunately, there was no significant missing data for this sample.

Figure 5: Quantitative research models

Model 1a

Model 1b
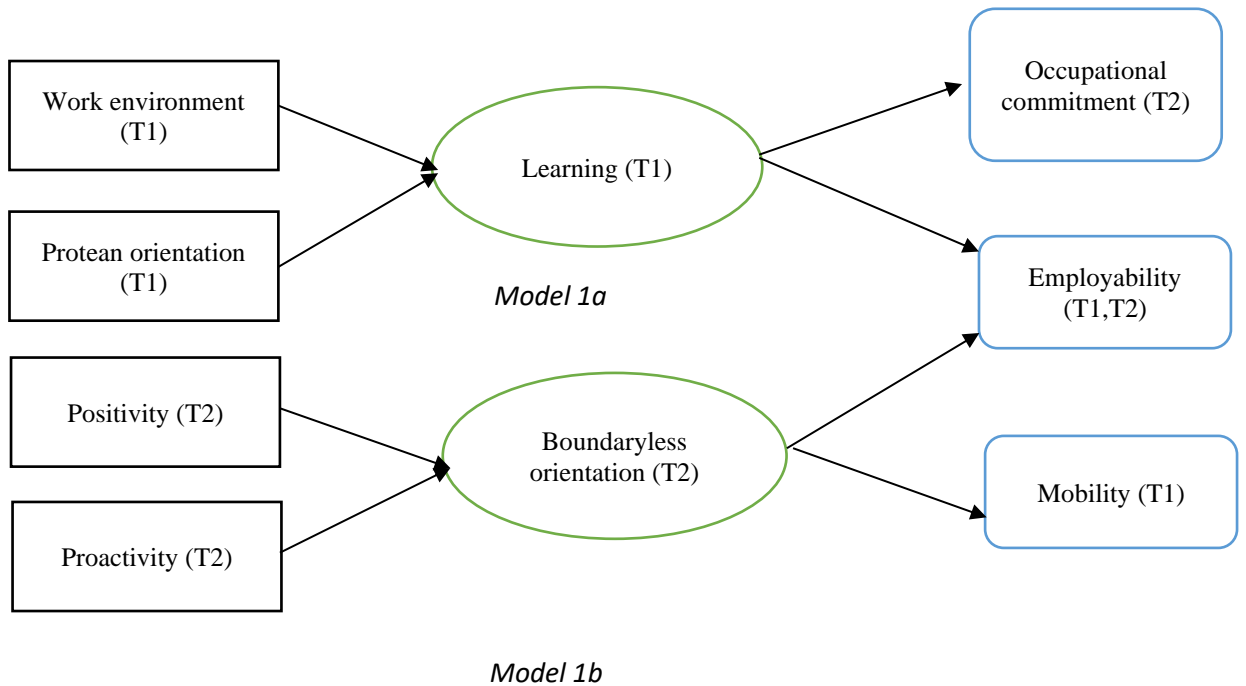
3.2.4 Measurement and analysis

I used the 11 items of the *Minnesota Importance Questionnaire* (Cronbach's alpha for the original scale: 0.77-0.92) to measure three relevant types of work environment: achievement, autonomy, and management. Achievement was measured using two items, an example item being: 'The feeling of accomplishment I get from my job'. Autonomy was measured using three items, an example item being: 'The change to try my own methods of doing the job'. Management was measured using six items, an example item being: 'The way company policies are put into practice'.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire scale in this study was 0.795. The three dimensions were then aggregated to measure employee's perceptions of work characteristics as a construct. This was done to emphasise the entire work environment in which the individual was embedded and whose elements were strictly inter-related. To verify the factorial validity of work characteristics as a higher-order construct, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using AMOS 24. A model with a second-order factor that grouped the sub-dimensions of three work characteristics (CFAw1) was tested and compared with the one-factor model (CFAw2) and a three-factor correlated model (CFAw3). To evaluate the model fit, we used conventional indices (see Table 43) and also tested the change in chi-square across models. The results confirmed the adequacy of the second-order model (CFAw1, Table 9), which provided a better fit than the others with all fit indices within the recommended criteria (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Moreover, all items

loaded significantly onto the respective latent variables and the three latent variables loaded significantly onto the second-order factor.

Table 43: Confirmatory factor analysis of the work characteristics construct.

Model	Cmin/df	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
CFAw1	2.535	.966	.951	.966	.054
CFAw2	2.943	.958	.938	.957	.061
CFAw3	3.753	.933	.912	.933	.072

The seven items of Baruch's (2014) Protean career orientation (Cronbach's alpha of original scale: .74-.84) were used to measure the Protean orientation of participants. An example item is: 'I navigate my own career, mostly according to my plan(s)'. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire scale in this study was 0.790.

I employed the six items of Elliot and Church's (1997) Learning orientation (Cronbach's alpha of original scale: .87) to measure the learning orientation of participants. An example item is: 'I prefer a task that really challenges me so I can learn new things'. Due to poor loading in the pilot test analysis, the item 'Completely master my job' was removed in the official study. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the remaining 5-item scale in this study was 0.854.

The four items of De Witte's (1992) Perceived Employability scale (Cronbach's alpha of original scale: .9) were employed to measure the perceived employability of participants. An example item is: 'I am optimistic that I would find another job, if I looked for one'. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire scale in model 1a was 0.842 and in model 1b was 0.809

The five items of Blau's (1985) Career Commitment scale (Cronbach's alpha of original scale: .82) were used to measure the occupational commitment of participants. An example item is: 'I definitely want a career for myself in my current area'. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire scale in this study was 0.734.

The six items of Bateman and Crant's (1993) Proactive Personality scale were used to measure the proactivity of participants. The original scale had 17 items. However, due to the length of the questionnaire, I adapted this to a six-item scale, initially used by Parker and Sprigg (1999). The Cronbach's alpha of the six-items scale was .86. An example item is: 'I am always looking for better ways to do things'. After the pilot test, I deleted two items due to poor factor loading. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire scale in this study was 0.751.

The eight items of Caprara et al.'s (2012) Positivity scale were used to measure the positivity of participants. The Cronbach's alpha of the original scale ranged from 0.77 to 0.89. An example item is: 'I look forward to the future with hope and enthusiasm'. However, after the pilot test, I

deleted one item due to poor factor loading. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire scale in this study was 0.732.

The eight items of Briscoe et al.'s (2006) Boundaryless Career Orientation scale (alpha of original scale: .89) were used to measure the boundaryless career orientation of participants. An example item is: 'I would enjoy working on projects with people across many organisations'. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire scale in this study was 0.868.

The five items of Briscoe et al.'s (2006) Mobility Preference scale (Cronbach's alpha of original scale: .75) were used to measure the mobility preference of participants. An example item is: 'I prefer to stay in a company I am familiar with rather than look for employment elsewhere'. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire scale in this study was 0.814.

Because all of the above instruments were developed in English, cross-cultural adaptation was needed (Beaton, Bombardier, Guillemin & Ferraz, 2000). Cross-cultural adaptation is a procedure complying with both language and cultural adaptation requirements when using a self-administered questionnaire in a new country, culture, and/or language (Beaton el al., 2000). The aim of cross-cultural adaptation is to uphold the content validity of the original measurement across research contexts. In this study I followed the cross-cultural adaptation guidelines of Beaton and associates (2000). Initially, I and another independent translator worked on the instruments separately. We then compared, contrasted, and worked towards an agreement on language issues. After the translation, the work was translated back into English to check for any problems. A synthesis between back and forth translations was achieved. The document was then discussed with an expert committee, including my supervisory team. One of the team was Vietnamese and she was especially helpful during this process. Finally, a pilot test was conducted with potential participants prior to the administration of the official survey.

Two key decisions regarding the data analysis in this research consisted of choosing either exploratory factor analysis (EFA) or confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and selecting either PROCESS or SEM tools to examine mediation effects. These decisions relate to controversial topics in quantitative research, as each method has its own strengths and weaknesses compared to its alternative. For example, EFA is more data-driven while CFA is more theory-driven (Jackson & Gillaspy & Purc-Stephenson, 2009) and EFA is preferable for scale development whereas CFA is more suitable for hypothesis testing (Hurley et al., 1997). CFA was employed in this study for two main reasons. Firstly, the purpose of this quantitative survey was not to develop a measurement scale but to test hypotheses relevant to the research questions. Secondly, the hypotheses were carefully formulated from the findings of previous qualitative studies and from existing career literature. Goodness of fit indices of CFA are presented in the findings section.

The roles of PROCESS and SEM in mediation analysis also attract a great deal of attention among scholars. Given the increasing importance assigned to understanding the mechanism of causal relationships among phenomena, mediation analysis has received special attention (Hayes & Rockwood, 2017). Consequently, statistical tools such as PROCESS and SEM have been compared and contrasted (Hayes et al., 2017). The main advantages of SEM compared with PROCESS mainly refer to its statistical power. In fact, SEM can simultaneously solve multiple interactions within the entire measurement and structural model and also addresses measurement error issues. However, SEM requires data that meets multiple and complicated assumptions. In addition, analysts need to be familiar with coding and/or programming to run SEM. By contrast, PROCESS automatically analyses data based on its lists of statistical models. Moreover, it offers a cost-free solution for analysts. Additionally, the comparative differences between statistical results produced by SEM and PROCESS are not especially significant (Hayes et al., 2017). Furthermore, the research design is as important as the statistical criteria (Preacher and Hayes, 2004). Most importantly, the researchers' knowledge, rather than statistical tools, is used to draw valid conclusions regarding mediation effects (Hayes, 2012). Given the resource limits on this survey, PROCESS was therefore chosen.

3.3 Findings

After cleaning, the dataset included information provided by 525 blue and white-collar workers aged between 20 to 60 who worked in four industries: rubber processing, wood processing, fishing, and telecommunication.

Model 1a:

Because identification problems may occur when using all observed and latent variables simultaneously, a confirmatory factor analysis of all five variables was conducted. For all other single-factor constructs, scale items were used as observed variables while factor scores were used as observed variables for work characteristics. The fit of the five-factor model (CFA1) was improved significantly by allowing pairs of errors to correlate (Figure 6). Specifically, pairs of errors for the following items: prot4 & prot5; prot6 & prot7, lear1 & lear2, lear5 & lear6, empl3 & empl4, comm1 & comm5; comm2 & comm5.

I compared a five-factor model with a four-factor model (CFA2-collapsing Protean & learning), a three-factor model (CFA3-collapsing Protean, learning & commitment), and a two-factor model (CFA4-collapsing Protean, learning, commitment & employability). The results indicated that the alternative models have a worse fit than the five-factor model (see Table 44)

Table 44: Alternatives to model 1a CFA.

Model	Cmin/df	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
CFA1	3.527	.936	.924	.935	.069
CFA2	4.125	.919	.906	.919	.077
CFA3	5.967	.877	.859	.876	.094
CFA4	7.838	.819	.795	.819	.114

Although common method bias was carefully considered in the research design, two statistical tests were applied to determine the risk of common method bias in this research model: Harman one-factor analysis and CFA marker technique. Only 25.73% of the variance in this model was explained by the general factor. The data therefore passed the Harman's single factor test. Common Latent Factor (CLF) was then applied to provide more solid evidence of a common method bias by examining changes in the CFA model (Figure 6) before and after adding a latent factor. Unfortunately, the data for this study failed the common latent factor test. Hence, the CLF was retained and composites were derived from factor scores for mediation analysis.

Means, standard deviations, and correlations between study variables are reported in Table 45. Among the significant correlations between independent and dependent variables, it is notable that employability has negative associations with independent variables (work characteristics, Protean orientation, and learning) and with commitment.

Table 45 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations in model 1a

	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Work characteristics	1.02	0.35	_			
2. Commitment	0.63	0.30	0.44**	_		
3. Employability	0.45	0.50	-0.33**	-0.21**	_	
4. Learning	1.62	0.42	0.08	0.15**	-0.16**	_
5. Protean orientation	1.30	0.34	0.01	0.01	-0.11*	0.54**

Figure 6: CFA of Model 1a
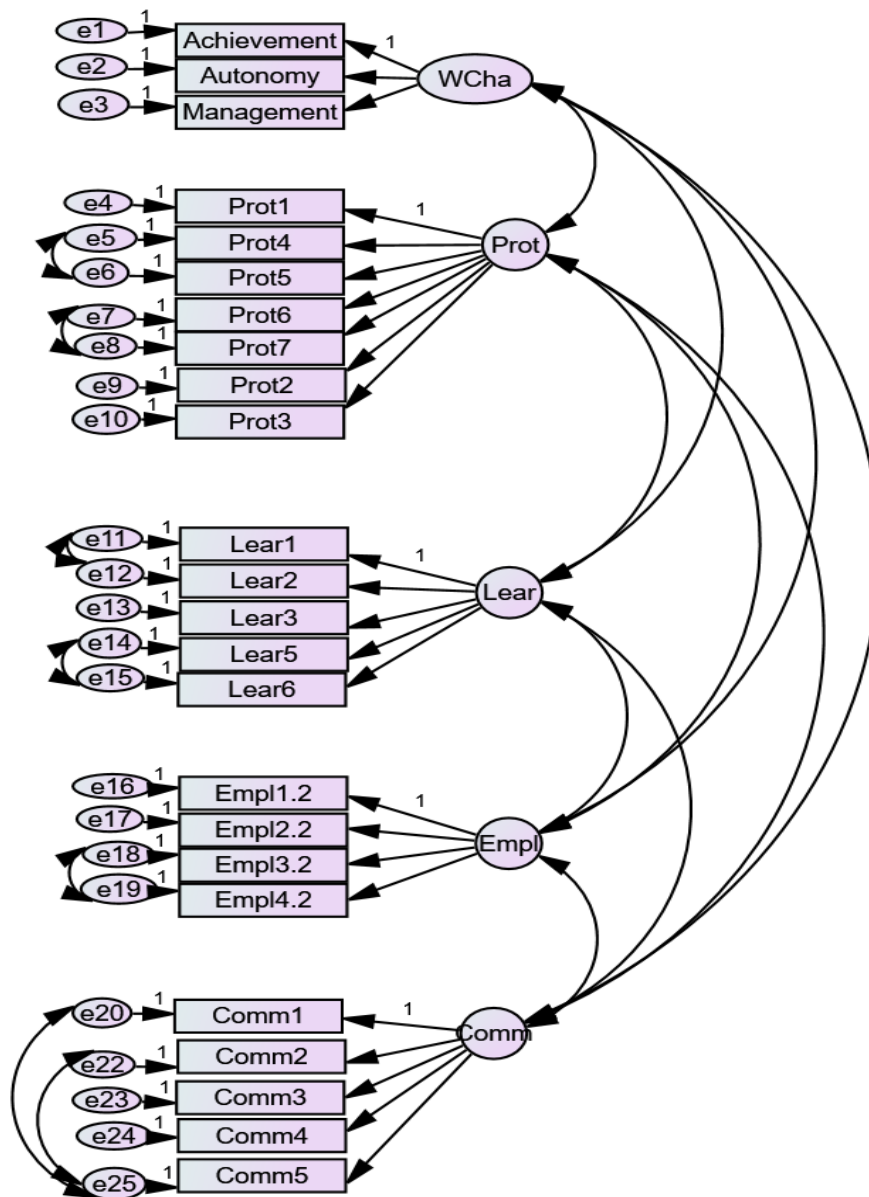
PROCESS macro was developed for SPSS (Preacher and Hayes, 2004; Hayes, 2012; Hayes, 2017) to test the hypotheses. Specifically, 5,000 bootstrapped samples and bootstrap estimates were used to construct bias-correlated CIs for all the significance tests reported in this study. Hypotheses were tested using Model 4, which depicts mediation effects. Model 4 was run twice for mediation relating to work characteristics, and twice for mediation relating to Protean orientation. Learning was treated as a mediation variable, whereas occupation and industry were control variables for all four mediation analyses. Dummy coding was applied for these categorical variables. This is because both the qualitative findings and literature have shown that work characteristics may affect other variables. The mediation effects are reported in table 46, 47.

Table 46 Learning as a mediator of relationships between work characteristics and employability

Path estimated	DV-Learning	DV-Employability	
	b(SE)	b(SE)	
Control variable			
Occupation	-.0577 (.0645)	.0778 (.0509)	
Industry_1	.0114 (.1021)	.0281 (.0805)	
Industry_2	-.0304 (.1087)	.0252 (.0857)	
Industry_3	.0213 (.1120)	.0494 (.0883)	
Independent variables			
Work characteristics	.266 (.0772)**	-.4658 (.0615)**	
Learning		.0279 (.0345)	
R square	.0314	.1134	
Bootstrap indirect effect	b(SE)	LL	UL
Employability	.0074(.0109)	-.0124	.0309

Table 47 Learning as a mediator of relationships between protean orientation and employability

Path estimated	DV- Learning	DV-Commitment	DV-Employability
	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)
Control variable			
Occupation	.0732 (.0589)	.0484 (.0321)	.0524 (.0544)
Industry_1	.0456 (.0915)	-.1179 (.0498)	.0521 (.0844)
Industry_2	-.1336 (.0967)	-.0826 (.0528)	.1219 (.0894)
Industry_3	.0471 (.1003)	.0249 (.0546)	.0317 (.0926)
Independent variables			
Protean orientation	.8585 (.0718)**	-.0996 (.0441)*	-.1702 (.0747)*
Learning		.1215 (.0238)**	.0316 (.0404)
R square	*.2225*	*.0684*	*.0256*
Bootstrap indirect effect	b(SE)	LL	UL
Commitment	.1043 (.0262)**	.056	.1600
Employability	.0271 (.0363)*	-.0416	.1023

The results show that work characteristics have a negative effect on employability (b = -0.4658, p <0.01) and a positive effect on learning (b = 0.266, p <0.01). Protean orientation has a positive association with learning (b = 0.8585, p <0.01) and a negative association with occupational commitment (b = -0.0996, p <0.05) and employability (b =-0.1702, p <0.05). Because the influences of learning on commitment and employability were indirectly examined via mediation testing, the coefficients of these relationships varied: however, learning has a positive effect on commitment (b = .1215, p <0.01) and a non-significant effect on employability (p>0.05). Based on values of the lower and upper bound of the 95% confidence interval, only the mediation effect of learning on protean orientation – occupational commitment (b = 0.1043, 95%BCa CI [0.0560, 0.1600] relationship was confirmed.

Model 1b:

To reduce the risk of identification problems with all observed and latent variables simultaneously, a confirmatory factor analysis of all five constructs was again conducted. Because all variables were single constructs, scale items were used as observed variables. Correlating pairs of errors: proa1 & proa2; posi1 & posi2; posi5 & posi8; boun3 & boun5; and boun7 & boun8 enhanced the fit of the five-factor model (CFA1) as illustrated in Figure 7. This was then compared

with the other three models: four-factor model (CFA2-collapsing proactivity & positivity), three-factor model (CFA3-collapsing proactivity & positivity; employability & mobility), and two-factor model (CFA4-collapsing proactivity, positivity & boundaryless; mobility & employability). No alternative model demonstrated a better fit than CFA1 (see Table 48).

The same common method testing techniques used in Model 1 were then applied in Model 2. Harman's single factor test explained only 25.72% of the variance. CLF also remained and data imputation was conducted.

Table 48: Model fit of four alternative models.

Model	Cmin/df	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
CFA1	2.847	.902	.887	.901	.059
CFA2	3.483	.866	.848	.865	.069
CFA3	5.586	.750	.719	.749	.094
CFA4	7.647	.635	.593	.633	.113

Descriptive statistics are summarised in Table 49. Correlations between variables are also identified. Similar mediation tests to Model 1 were then applied in Model 2. Boundaryless orientation was treated as a mediation variable, whereas age and industry and occupation were control variables for all four mediation analyses. The mediation effects are reported below. The results show that proactivity has a positive effect on boundaryless orientation (b = 0.6343, p <0.01), employability (b = 0.3912, p <0.01) and mobility (b = 0.8245, p < 0.01). Positivity also has a positive effect on boundaryless orientation (b=1.2786, p<0.01), employability (b=0.8420, p<0.01) and mobility (b=1.6451, p<0.01). Because the influences of boundaryless orientation on mobility and employability were indirectly examined via mediation testing, the coefficients of these relationships varied: however, boundaryless orientation has a positive effect on employability (p <0.01). By contrast, the effect of boundaryless orientation on mobility is not straightforward. The complicated influences of boundaryless orientation on mobility as indicated in Tables 50 and 51 suggest the existence of a spurious mediator. According to Fiedler, Schott, and Meiser (2011) spurious mediation occurs when the proposed mediator correlates with another variable, which can have an impact on the entire model.

The findings confirm all of the mediation effects of boundaryless orientation on employability whereas only the mediation role of boundaryless orientation on positivity – mobility is confirmed. Specifically, the mediation role of boundaryless orientation on the relationship between proactivity and employability (b = 0.1909, 95% BCa CI [.1272, .2533]) and the mediation

role of boundaryless orientation on the relationship between positivity and employability (b = 0.4749, 95% BCa CI [.3473, .6196]) and mobility (b = 0.2316, 95% BCa CI [.1130, .3489]) were confirmed.

Figure 7 CFA of model 1b
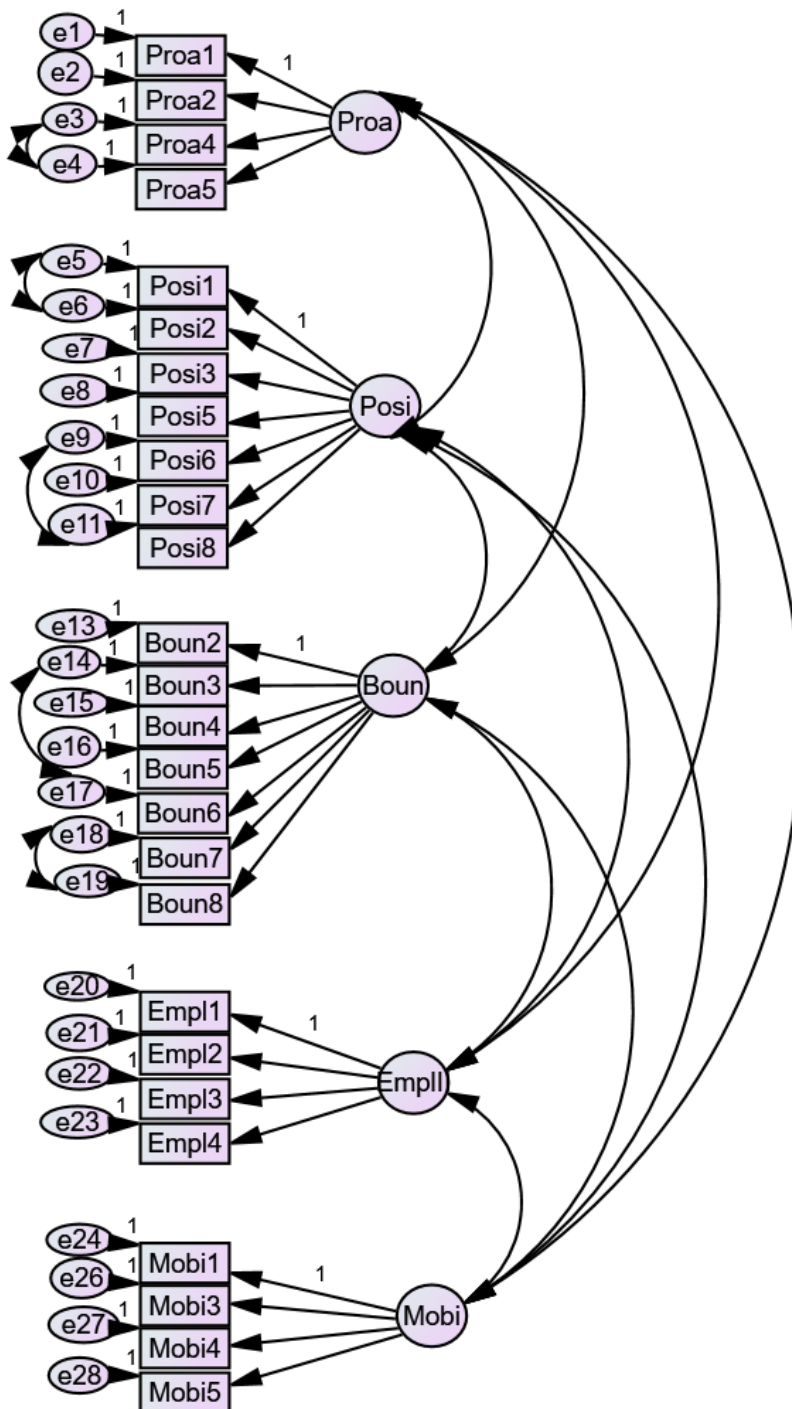
Table 49 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations in Model 1b

	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Mobility	3.88	0.76	_			
2. Employability	2.85	0.70	0.40**	_		
3. Boundaryless orientation	3.11	0.74	0.42**	0.49**	_	
4. Positivity	1.44	0.25	0.62**	0.46**	0.47**	_
5. Proactivity	4.00	0.65	0.72**	0.54**	0.58***	0.72**

Table 50 Boundaryless orientation as a mediator of relationships between proactivity and employability, and proactivity and mobility

Path estimated	DV-Boundaryless	DV-Employability	DV-Mobility
	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)
Control variable			
Occupation	-.0487 (.0627)	.0201 (.0606)	.0332(.0570)
Industry_1	.0296 (.1005)	.1955 (.0972)*	-.0013 (.0913)
Industry_2	-.2869 (.1052)**	.3357 (.1024)**	.0414 (.0963)
Industry_3	.0473 (.1100)	.0903 (.1064)	.0180 (.100)
Independent variables			
Proactivity	.6343 (.0401)**	.3912 (.0473)**	.8245 (.0444)**
Boundaryless orientation		.3010 (.0427)**	.0124 (.0401)
R square	.3753	.3573	.5058
Bootstrap indirect effect	b(SE)	LL	UL
Employability	.1909 (.033)**	.1272	.2533
Mobility	.0079 (.0270)	-.0448	.0603

Table 51 Boundaryless orientation as a mediator of relationships between positivity and employability, and positivity and mobility

Path estimated	DV-Boundaryless	DV-Employability	DV-Mobility
	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)
Control variable			
Occupation	-.0661 (.0683)	.0193 (.0613)	.0291 (.0623)
Industry_1	.0424 (.1096)	.1938 (.0983)*	-.0011 (.0998)
Industry_2	-.2459 (.1147)*	.3807 (.1033)**	.1396 (.1049)
Industry_3	.0475 (.1200)	.0835 (.1076)	.0053 (.1092)
Independent variables			
Positivity	1.2786 (.1128)**	.8420 (.1131)**	1.6451(.1148)**
Boundaryless orientation		.3714 (.0396)**	.1811 (.0402)**
R square	*.2566*	*.3426*	*.4102*
Bootstrap indirect effect	*b(SE)*	*LL*	*UL*
Employability	.4749 (.0699)**	.3473	.6196
Mobility	.2316 (.0599)**	.113	.3489

3.4   Discussion

Driven by notable findings from previous exploratory research, this quantitative research is the first to examine individual career phenomena in manufacturing industries (Figure 9). Embedded in manufacturing organisations, the study examined the causal effects of career actors/ systems on individual career outcomes. Two direct actors/ systems include both institutions and individuals. Industry served as an underlying actor/ system in the research. Two research models with seven hypotheses were proposed to investigate the effects (Table 20). Model 1a focused on the mediating role of learning on the relationship between work characteristics and employability, Protean orientation and employability, and

Protean orientation and occupational commitment. Model 1b focused on the mediating function of boundaryless orientation on the relationships between positivity and employability, positivity and mobility, proactivity and employability, and proactivity and mobility. Each of the two different research models tells its own insightful story. Combined, they draw out the different nuances of individual careers.

Table 52 : Summary of hypothesis testing

H1: Learning mediates the relationship between work characteristics and employability.	Not supported
H2: Learning mediates the relationship between Protean career orientation and employability.	Not supported
H3: Learning mediates the relationship between Protean career orientation and occupational commitment.	Supported
H4: Boundaryless career orientation mediates the effects of proactivity on employability.	Supported
H5: Boundaryless career orientation mediates the effects of proactivity on mobility.	Not Supported
H6: Boundaryless career orientation mediates the effects of positivity on employability.	Supported
H7: Boundaryless career orientation mediates the effects of positivity on mobility.	Supported

Figure 8: Multi-level individual career dynamics in manufacturing industry
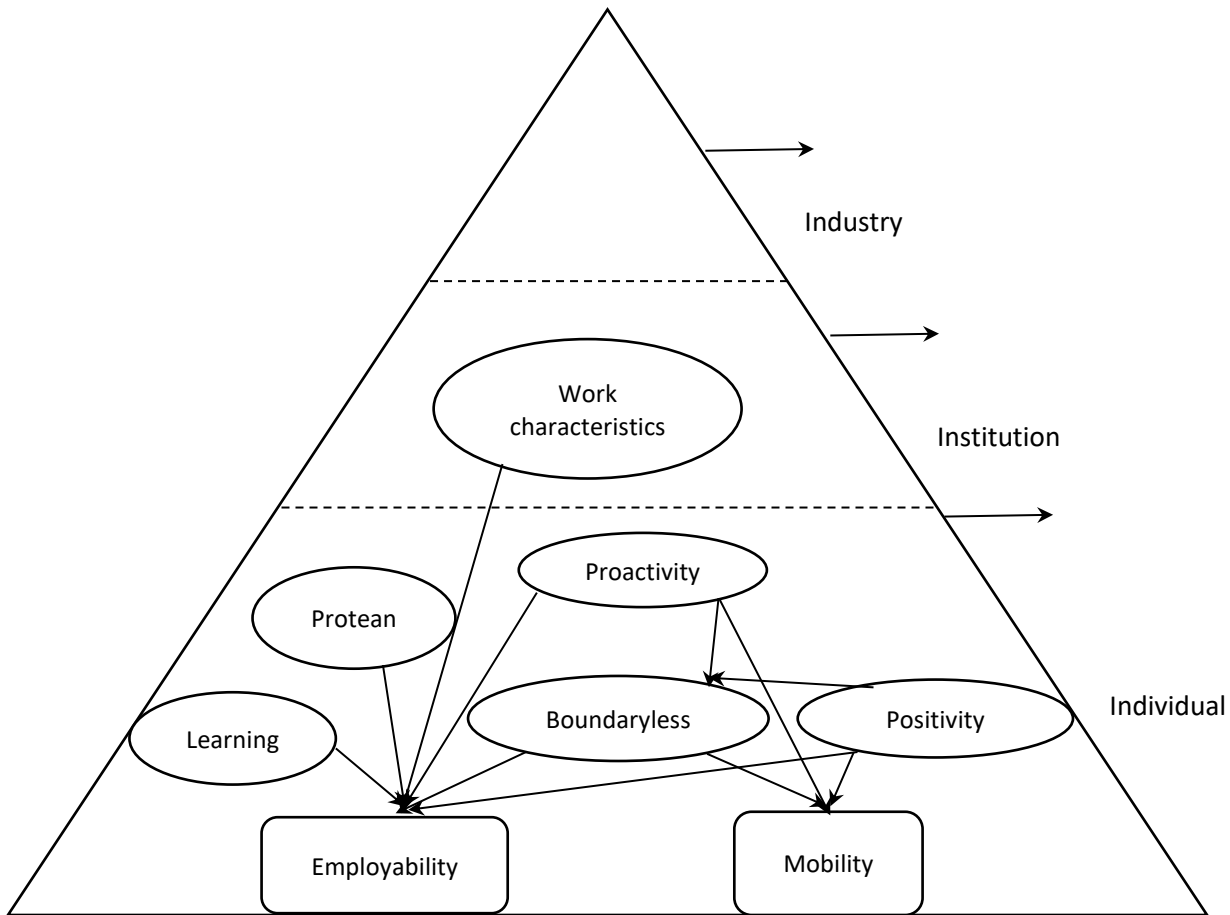
The first model aimed to test two outcomes: perceived employability and occupational commitment via learning. However, the mediating mechanism of learning was only recognised for the effect of Protean career orientation and occupational commitment, whereas some direct effects between the dependent and independent variables were found.

This study is the first to test the direct and indirect relationships between work characteristics (achievement, autonomy, management) and employability. Although the indirect effect via learning was not confirmed, the negative influence of these work characteristics on employability merits further investigation. The most current prediction in Job Design Theory posit that positive work elements will enhance employees' employability (Van der Heijden & Bakker, 2011; Van der Heijden, Gorgievski & De Lange, 2016). However, the manufacturing context in this study reveals the opposite in that the work environment appears to hinder employability. Furthermore, employability was also negatively associated with learning and had no statistically significant association with Protean orientation.

Such unexpected findings bring the PE fit theory, especially the TWA, back into consideration in the contemporary career context. In particular, the dependent and independent variables have extended the key principles of this theory by inserting current career dialogues into the classic theory (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). For example, satisfactoriness of work environment is reflected in employees' evaluation of their job characteristics and their career behaviours. Regardless of the positive association between work characteristics and learning, its negative impact on employability infers a level of low satisfactoriness within the research organisations (Dawis, 2005). This argument is strengthened by the finding that learning is positively associated with Protean orientation and both these phenomena are negatively linked to employability (Dawis, 2005) and occupational commitment. This unexpected situation might be the result of disequilibrium between person and environment.

The main source of unsatisfactoriness derives from the new research context. Manufacturing industries in an emerging economy often provide fresh insights into the current career literature, which is dominated by the biased images of high-profile careerists in high-tech industries. As a result of this over-positive bias (Baruch & Vardi, 2016), some potential misfits between a Protean and boundaryless career within the working environment have arisen (Baruch, 2014) but have received little empirical support. Thus, by purposely focusing on a manufacturing industry, this model has contributed to a critical understanding of individual careers.

Unsatisfactoriness is further explored in the second model, which considered two career outcomes: perceived mobility and employability as functions of proactivity, positivity, and a boundaryless mediator. While Model 1a has received little attention in the current career literature, even fewer attempts have been invested in testing the proposed hypotheses in Model 1b. For example, while the majority of 'new career' scholars advocate mobility as a proxy of the boundaryless career (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), this research is the first to empirically explain the proxy by proposing a boundaryless career orientation as a mechanism that facilitates the causal relationships between proactivity and employability/ mobility, and positivity and employability/mobility.

The two independent variables of model 1b are proactivity and positivity, two relevant but under-explored predictors of individual careers (Orkibi & Brandt, 2015; Presbitero, 2015). By paying attention to the influence of these aspects of human nature (Ryan & Deci, 2000), this study goes against the trend of over-focusing on the Big Five traits in career research (Kaspi-Baruch, 2016). Most of the direct, indirect, and mediated effects between these salient features of individual characteristics and outcomes (except for the mediation of a boundaryless orientation on the relationship between proactivity and mobility)

have been recognised in research, advancing the proposition of SDT towards a better understanding of career phenomena.

While several theoretical ideas regarding the potential influences of proactivity and positivity have been infrequently promoted in contemporary career understanding (Avey, Luthans & Yousself, 2010; Berntson, Naswall & Sverke, 2008; Briscoe et al., 2006; Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; Lyons, Schweitzer & Ng, 2015; Siu, Cheung & Lui, 2015; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019), this quantitative research is the first to clearly test the mediation role of a boundaryless career orientation on the causal effects of proactivity and positivity on career outcomes. For example, the positive direct and indirect relationships between proactivity, positivity, and a boundaryless career and employability were supported. Given the negative association between work characteristics, learning, and employability in model 1a, it is not an overstatement to anticipate a disequilibrium state between employees and their work environment.

The two quantitative models, furthermore, bring SDT, which arises from psychological fields, firmly into the career literature (Dahling & Lauricella, 2017; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). Specifically, model 1a addresses the social psychological aspects of intrinsic motivation. The positive Protean-learning association and the negative influences of work characteristics and Protean orientation on employability empirically exemplify the way that the contextual environment may thwart the intrinsic motivation of employees (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Conversely, Model 1b focuses on self-aspects of intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Two individual characteristics: proactivity and positivity are positive predictors of mobility and employability. These causal relationships are partly mediated by boundaryless orientation. These quantitative results hence strengthen the recent move to integrate SDT into current thinking on the dynamics of individual careers (Dahling & Lauricella, 2017; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009).

3.5   Conclusion

This quantitative research tested seven hypotheses on the mechanism of the causal process operating between determinants and outcomes of individual career phenomena through two mediators: learning and boundaryless orientation. The first three hypotheses contributed to the first research model, and the final four hypotheses contributed to the second research model. Empirical evidence partly upholds Model 1 and fully supports Model 2. Taken together, these research findings contribute to reviving the classic notion of PE fit, especially the TWA, in a contemporary career context. As such, they build a bridge

between SDT, Job Design Theory and contemporary career literature. The issue of interdisciplinary career research was therefore also addressed during the research process.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusion

The exploratory sequential research generated an integrative and interdisciplinary understanding of the dynamics of individual career. The novel research context, i.e., the new manufacturing powerhouse in Asia and its manufacturing sector, yielded fresh perspectives on individual career dynamics. The pragmatist paradigm also helped facilitate the knowledge generation process. The multi-levels of an individual's career, comprising individual, institutional, and industrial levels, were reflected in both the qualitative and quantitative studies. The following paragraphs will discuss each of these arguments in detail.

Driven by two new meta-frameworks in career research: the career ecosystem (Baruch, 2015; Baruch & Rousseau, 2018) and systematic theory framework (Patton & McMahon, 1996; 2006; 2014), this mixed-method research considered individuals to be central to a contemporary career ecosystem. The dynamics of individual careers were explored through their recursive relationships with institutional actors (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Multiple patterns of interaction, interdependence, and interconnectedness between individuals and their organisations were uncovered (Baruch, 2015). The underlying mechanism of these patterns are explained by classical career theory as mentioned in the System Theory Framework, and by contemporary career thinking as explained in the career ecosystem and relevant concepts and theories from other disciplines (Table 52, 53).

Indeed, the natural and prominent career phenomena emerging in this study correspond to contemporary concepts in careers, psychology, and job design; thereby explaining the way in which individual and institutional actors co-exist within a career ecosystem. These phenomena include work characteristics, career goals, personality, and self-management resources, all of which are relevant to job demands and resources; Protean, boundaryless, and Kaleidoscope career; career resources, proactivity, and positive psychology. The positive presence of these phenomena helps renew the ideas enshrined in the theory of content and the theory of process of career development, thus providing a better interpretation of the system theory framework. Theories and concepts from other disciplines such as job design, self-determination, proactivity, positive psychology, and agency theory help to interpret the meanings of the interaction, interdependence and interconnectedness among these phenomena.

Table 53: Interdisciplinary and integrative framework of individual career dynamics

	Career ecosystem		System theory framework	Interdisciplinary concepts and theories
Characteristics of career (eco)system(s) elements	Relevant features	Relevant concepts	Relevant theory	
Work characteristics *Work support and benefits* *Work requirements* *Work constraints*	What institutional actors bring to and do in the ecosystem?		Theory of content and theory of process of career development	Job demands-resources model Job design theory
Career goals *Entrepreneurial goals* *Subjective goals* *Objective goals* *Life-work congruence* *No goal*	What individual actors bring to and do in the ecosystem?	Boundaryless career Protean career Kaleidoscope career Career resources (*Identity & other psychological resources, skill resources, sustainable outcome resources*)		Self-determination theory Proactivity, Positive psychology (Psychological Capital) Agency theory
Personality *Proactivity* *Conscientiousness* *Passivity* *Positivity*				
Self-management resources *Self-direction, occupational orientation, change resistance, & indecisiveness* *Learning, networking, planning, opportunity taking, problem solving, capital mobilising* *Performance, commitment & employability*				

Table 54: Interactions, interconnectedness and interdependence among career actors

Institutional actor/ system	Individual actor/ system	Individual outcomes
Intra-relationships among work characteristics	*Intra-relationships among individual characteristics*	*Intra-relationships among individual characteristics*
Interactive effect of work support & benefits and work constraints on outcomes	Subjective goal and positivity Life-work congruence and/ or goal ambiguity and passivity Self-direction and goals (entrepreneurial, objective, subjective goals and life-work congruence) Subjective goal and bounded-orientation Learning and networking	Performance and satisfaction Performance and commitment Performance and mobility Non-mobility and low employability Mobility vs commitment/ entrenchment
Work characteristics and outcomes	*Individual characteristics and outcomes*	
Work support & benefits and work requirements: positive outcomes Work constraints: negative outcomes	Goal ambiguity: negative outcomes Other goals: positive outcomes Proactivity and positivity: voluntary mobility, good performance, and high employability Passivity: low employability Self-direction: performance, mobility, learning and commitment Bounded-orientation (occupation): occupational commitment, employability Boundary-crossing (occupation): learning, mobility, career commitment Change resistance and/or indecisiveness: mobility, low employability Learning: performance, mobility Networking: employability, mobility and performance	
Interactions between Institutional and individual actors		

Reinforcement of internal influences on the effects of work support and benefits on career outcomes Conscientiousness weakening the influences of work constraints on career outcomes Other individual characteristics strengthening the influences of work constraints on career outcomes	Work-support and benefits reinforcing internal influences	

This thesis aimed to advance current understanding regarding the characteristics and mechanisms of individual career dynamics in an emerging country. In fact, Vietnam – the new manufacturing powerhouse and its growing manufacturing sector (Iram & Malik, 2017), has yielded interesting insights into the dynamics of individual careers. Indeed, the country has witnessed dramatic changes as a result of its transitional process. Transitional efforts such as employing a hybrid approach (combining central planning with free market policies) to economic development, implementing a SOE restructuring agenda, trade liberalisation, attracting investment, and modernising infra structure facilities have resulted in structural reform of its economy, culture, and management practices (Iram & Malik, 2017; Nguyen, Teo & Ho, 2018; Rowley, Quang & Warner, 2007). Such efforts pose considerable challenges for human resource management and career development. For instance, enhancing the efficacy and effectiveness of human labour is crucial to an economy that relies heavily on its workforce (Bartram, Stanton & Thomas, 2009). Moreover, vocational and skill shortages are serious shortcomings that need to be overcome (Montague, 2013).

Given that Vietnam is an underexplored context in career literature, pragmatism was the most suitable paradigm to employ to explore the dynamics of individual careers (Table 54). In particular, the exploratory qualitative research offers a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of individual careers. Semi-structured interviews with 83 participants working in different organisations, industries and holding different positions revealed the multiple effects of work characteristics, career goals and individual characteristics on the dynamics. Similarly, mobility, occupational boundary and performance exerted mixed effects on individual careers whereas learning and satisfaction often led to positive outcomes. In combination, these qualitative findings demonstrate the characteristics, forces, and the dynamics of a career (eco)system that requires interpretation not just from career research but other theoretical frameworks such as the Job demands – resources model, Self Determination Theory, Agency theory, and the field of psychology.

Based on the meaningful and novel findings from the qualitative research, the emphasis then changed to deriving statistical inferences on the mediating mechanisms of learning and a boundaryless career. Quantitative research was therefore conducted with more than 500 employees in manufacturing firms, the results of which showed that the mediating roles of learning and a boundaryless career were partly confirmed. As before, interdisciplinary interpretations are required to explain such mechanisms.

It not only provided divergent views on individual career phenomena and their recursive relationships through qualitative research, it also allowed stronger inferences to be made about the interconnectedness, interaction, and interdependence between these phenomena (Teddlie & Tashakkori,

2009). This exploratory sequential research satisfied the five main criteria of interdisciplinary research (Chudzikowski & Mayrhofer, 2011). First, the research design took into consideration three actors in the career ecosystem: careerists in various organisations, industries in different areas, and employees in manufacturing firms in Vietnam. Second, both structure and agency factors pertinent to careers were thoroughly explored and explained. Third, the dynamics of individual careers across boundaries of interest were explored. Fourth, the contribution of different disciplines to a fresh career understanding are demonstrated. Fifth, comprehensive research combining both qualitative and quantitative components offered deep insight into individual career dynamics.

Table 55: Comparing and contrasting qualitative and quantitative research

	Qualitative research		Quantitative research	
Research setting	Participants from various organisations and industries		Participants from three organisations in the manufacturing sector	
Sample	83		>500	
(Prominent) Themes/ Variables	Name	Effects	Name	Effects
	Work characteristics	Multiple effects	Work characteristics	Positive & negative effects
	Career goals		Protean orientation	Positive & negative effects
	Mobility	Mixed effects	Learning	Mediating the relationship between Protean career orientation and occupational commitment
	Learning	Positive effects	Occupational commitment	NA

				Positive effects
	Characteristics	Multiple effects	Proactivity	
	Self-direction	Positive effects	Positivity	
	Occupational boundary: Bounded vs boundary-crossing	Mixed effects	Boundaryless orientation	
	Performance	Mixed effects	Mobility	NA
	Employability	NA	Employability	NA
Integrative views	Characteristics, forces and dynamics of career (eco)systems		Mechanisms of individual career dynamics	
Interdisciplinary views	Job demands- resources models Self-Determination theory Agency theory Proactivity & positive psychology concepts		Proactivity & positive psychology concepts Self-Determination theory Job design theory Contemporary career concepts	

Sources of individual career dynamics are explicated in depth in both qualitative and quantitative research (Table 55). In the qualitative research, the most prominent individual career phenomena discussed by interviewees were the following: work characteristics, goals, mobility, learning, satisfaction, characteristics, performance, self-direction, networking, occupational orientation, commitment, and employability. The prominence of work characteristics in this research may come as a welcome surprise to contemporary career literature which has been confused by the argument that: 'the organisational career is not dead, but in need of redefinition' (Clarke, 2013). The importance of work characteristics in individual careers is the point where job design theory may add to the field of career management (Hall & Heras, 2010).

The emergence of the career goal continuum: entrepreneurship, work-life balance, intrinsic and extrinsic goals, and goal ambiguity exemplify the three scenarios of individual careers mentioned in the career ecosystem framework (Baruch, 2015) and the authenticity – balance – challenge kaleidoscope of a career (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). It also fits well with the autonomous and controlled motivation

continuum of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), connecting it to career research. Other propositions enshrined within self-determination theory and job design theory that were conclusively confirmed in this study were the prominence of proactivity vs passivity, and positivity in predicting individual behaviour at work (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Along with conscientiousness, these characteristics together account for differences between respondents in their careers (Li et al, 2014; Lin et al, 2015).

Other popular phenomena in existing research are the dimensions of Protean and boundaryless careers and their outcomes. In fact, the multi-directions of physical career mobility are explained (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; Guan et al, 2018). In contrast to the optimistic view of contemporary careers presented in the literature (Baruch & Vardi, 2016), this study offers more balanced interpretations of career self-management. A proactive perspective on career self-management involves self-direction, boundary-crossing orientation, and may also include bounded orientation. A passive perspective on career self-management involves change resistance and indecisiveness. The relevance of learning and networking in forecasting career outcomes such as satisfaction, performance, commitment, and employability, as proposed by career, job design, and self-determination scholars, was also confirmed (Hall & Mirvis, 1996; Parker, 2014; Porter et al., 2016; Van der Heijden, 2016).

The dynamic interaction and interconnectedness between the above-mentioned phenomena were reflected in the qualitative as well as the quantitative research. The narratives of participants in different organisations reveal the mixed effects of work characteristics. For instance, work support and benefits were positively associated with learning, networking, mobility, satisfaction, commitment, performance, and employability. Work constraints often lead to dissatisfaction, non-voluntary mobility, and low employability. This may be explained by the diversity of leadership, management styles and HRM practices in Vietnam (Quang, 2006). Similarly, the quantitative survey, which focused on manufacturing organisations, showed that work characteristics (autonomy, achievement, management) negatively correlated with employability and positively correlated with learning. These relationships may have arisen as a result of skills shortages in Vietnam's manufacturing and service sectors (Montague, 2013). Currently, 50% of graduates need to be retrained and lack skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and English proficiency (Nguyen & Robinson, 2010).

The linkages between elements of attitudes and outcomes in relation to Protean and boundaryless careers, such as performance, mobility, learning and commitment, were also identified in the qualitative study. For instance, proactive features such as self-direction, boundary-crossing, and/ or bounded orientation were deemed to lead to a promising career. By contrast, passive features such as change resistance and indecisiveness were believed to lead to a struggling career. The quantitative

research provided further insight into the attributes reflected in this interconnectedness within the context of manufacturing firms. Notably, a boundaryless career attitude positively relates to outcomes (employability and mobility), and its mediating effects on the relationships between individual characteristics (proactivity and positivity) and these outcomes were partly recognised. At the same time, a Protean career attitude positively influences learning and negatively affects employability and commitment. The prevalence of Protean and boundaryless career attitudes in the research strengthen the proposition that Vietnamese employees now demonstrate a high level of individualism and a lower level of uncertainty avoidance (Tuan & Napier, 2000). However, constraints in the working environment lead to a misfit between Protean careerists and their organisations (Baruch, 2014).

The crucial role of learning and networking in developing and managing one's career was highlighted by participants in the semi-structured interviews. As shown in previous research, networking has been found to contribute to the employability (Batistic & Tymon, 2011; Porter et al., 2016), mobility (Woff & Moser, 2010), and performance (Moqbel et al., 2013; Ng & Chow, 2005) of employees. The impacts of learning on performance and mobility were confirmed by interviewees as well as by existing literature (Lin & Chang, 2005; Shih et al, 2011). The influence of learning on employability, however, was not confirmed in the survey of manufacturing firms. Nevertheless, the mediating role of learning on the relationship between Protean career orientation and occupational commitment was established, advancing current understanding about this relationship (Lo Presti et al, 2018).

The dynamics of interaction, interdependence, and interconnectedness between career actors and career phenomena were further advanced by the qualitative findings. In particular, the linkages between performance, satisfaction, commitment, and mobility indicate the involvement of individuals as an agent in a psychological contract with their working organisation as a principal. In fact, the agent will flexibly manage their input to maximise their benefits, which is reflected in the relationships between performance and satisfaction (Bowking et al., 2015), performance and commitment (Wang et al., 2018), and performance and mobility (Bection et al., 2017). The findings of the qualitative research, moreover, demonstrate the recursiveness in the efforts of individual and institutional career actors. For example, internal determinants such as goal and self-management may strengthen the positive impact of work support and benefits. Work support and benefits also enhance the facilitating role of proactivity, positivity and networking on individual career outcomes. The relevance of contemporary job design and self-determination theory (Humphrey et al., 2007; Li et al., 2014; Oldham & Fried, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) in explaining the mechanism of such interactions within interconnectedness highlight the benefits of an interdisciplinary understanding of careers.

Overall, the exploratory sequential research fully addresses the dynamics of individual careers, embedded in a transitional emerging country. Several implications arise from the research findings. First, although Western approaches to Human Resource Management has been adopted in the country since 2004 (Nguyen, Teo & Ho, 2018), the emergence of job characteristics as the main determinants of individual careers has raised the issue of applying Strategic Human Resource Management and Career Management in the workplace. Second, the opposing career scenarios between careerists who are self-motivated, proactive, positive and self-managed on the one hand, and those who are amotivated, passive, and self-neglected on the other, call for differentiated training and development practices. This is especially pertinent given that skill shortages are a serious problem in Vietnam, despite its impressive economic growth (Montague, 2013; Nguyen, Teo & Ho, 2018). Third, given the importance of informal and workplace learning, which was a key finding in both the qualitative and quantitative data, work-integrated learning is urgently needed. This requires integrative, committed, and substantial efforts from government, academic institutions and industry because current linkages among these parties are weak (Bilsland & Nagy, 2015).

Despite its careful design, there are several limitations in this research that need to be addressed. First, the cross-sectional nature of the research meant that important features of the career ecosystem and system theory frameworks that require longitudinal investigation, such as changes, unpredictable chance (Patton & McMahon, 2014), equilibrium, and stability (Baruch, 2015) were not included. Second, a reliance on self-report information meant that the characteristics of institutional actors were only reflected indirectly. Third, by striving to produce fresh perspectives on individual careers within a special research setting, the findings of this thesis may be not applicable to Western countries. However, similar interpretations may work well in other transitional or emerging countries. Data-driven, interdisciplinary, and integrative research is recommended in future work on career management to extend the current boundaries of knowledge.

Table 56: Sources of individual career dynamics from different viewpoints

Emerging phenomena	Conventional explanation from career theories	Conventional explanation from other disciplines	Novel findings from this research
Work characteristics as the main force of institutional career actor	Organizational career management practices (Baruch, 2006; Lewis & Arnold, 2012).	Job demand-resource (Bagdadli & Gianecchini, 2019; Oldham & Fried, 2016; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).	• Job characteristics such as job resources and benefits, job requirement and job constraints are considered as the dominant influence of individual career by interviewees. • Survey in manufacturing sector show that job characteristics have positive effect on learning and negative effect on employability
Career goals as crucial force of individual career actor	Value -driven (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Sargent & Domberger, 2007) Authenticity, balance, challenge (Mainiero, & Sullivan, 2005)	Three basic human needs (relatedness, competency and autonomy) that are externally regulated, or introjected regulated or identified regulated (Ryan & Deci, 2017).	• Interview transcripts indicate 5 main goals that pointed out by respondents: entrepreneurship, life work congruence, intrinsic & extrinsic motivation, goal ambiguity • Narratives of participants reflect two opposite nuances of self-management: proactive behaviours (self-direction and occupation orientation) and passive behaviours (change resistance and indecisiveness).
Self-management as crucial force of individual career actor	Self-direction (Briscoe & Hall, 2006) & boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Inkson, 2006; Sullivan & Baruch,		• Findings from quantitative research in manufacturing firms indicate that protean orientation has positive effect on learning, negative effect on occupational commitment and employability. Additionally, boundaryless orientation positively affects commitment and

	2009; Rodrigues & Guest, 2010)		employability, and mediates effect of positivity on employability and mobility, and of proactivity on employability
Characteristics as crucial force of individual career actor	Big Five Traits (McCrae & John, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 2008).	Proactivity and positivity as human nature ((Ryan & Deci, 2017).	• Respondents in qualitative research figure our 4 main important characteristics affecting their career: Proactivity, positivity, conscientiousness, passivity • Survey results show that both proactivity and positivity have positive effects on employability and mobility
Learning as crucial force of individual career actor	Learning cycles in contemporary career (Hall & Mirvis, 1996)	Enriched job design encourages formal & informal learning (Parker 2014; Van der Heijden, 2016).	• Importance of informal learning is confirmed by interviewees. • Quantitative results confirm mediating effect of learning on the relationship between protean orientation on commitment and employability

Appendices

Appendix 1: Case summaries

Participation	Age	Qualification	Type of employment	Type of occupation (*)	Area of origin	Working organizations
1	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Not available
2	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Public organization
3	Under 30	Vocational training	Full-time employment	G	Central	Not available
4	30-40	Bachelor	Portfolio career	E,M	Central	Public organization
5	30-40	Master	Portfolio career	E, M	Central	Public organization, private organization
6	30-40	Bachelor	Full-time employment	M	Central	Private organization
7	30-40	Bachelor	Self-employment	G	Central	Not available
8	Under 30	Bachelor	Self-employment	E, W	Central	Foreign, private organization
9	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Private organization
10	30-40	Bachelor	Self-employment	BO	Central	Not available
11	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Foreign organization
12	30-40	Bachelor	Self-employment	E	Central	Private organization
13	Under 30	Bachelor	Portfolio career	E,W	Central	Public, private organisation
14	30-40	Bachelor	Portfolio career	W	Central	Foreign, private organization
15	Under 30	Bachelor	Self-employment	E	Central	Private organization
16	30-40	Bachelor	Portfolio career	W	Central	Private organization
17	Under 30	Bachelor	Self-employment	BO	Central	Private organization
18	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Not available

19	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Public organization
20	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Not available
21	30-40	Bachelor	Self-employment	E	North	Foreign, private organization
22	30-40	Master	Portfolio career	M	North	Public, private organization
23	40-50	Bachelor	Portfolio career	E,M	North	Public, Foreign, Private organization
24	30-40	Bachelor	Self-employment	W	North	Not available
25	40-50	Bachelor	Self-employment	E	North	Private organization
26	40-50	Bachelor	Self-employment	E	North	Private organization
27	40-50	Phd	Portfolio career	E,W	North	Public, Foreign, Private organization
28	40-50	Master	Full-time employment	M	North	Public, Private organization
29	40-50	Bachelor	Full-time employment	M	North	Public, Private organization
30	30-40	Bachelor	Self-employment	BO	North	Private organization
31	40-50	Bachelor	Full-time employment	M	North	Foreign organization
32	40-50	Bachelor	Self-employment	BO	North	Public, Private organization
33	40-50	Bachelor	Full-time employment	M	North	Foreign organization
34	20-30	Bachelor	Portfolio career	E,W	North	Foreign, Private organization
35	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Public organization
36	Under 30	Bachelor	Self-employment	BO	Central	Private organization
37	Under 30	NG	Full-time employment	G	Central	Not available
38	Under 30	Vocational training	Full-time employment	G	Central	Not available

39	Under 30	Vocational training	Full-time employment	G		Central	Public organization
40	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W		Central	Not available
41	Under 30	Vocational training	Full-time employment	B		Central	Not available
42	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W		Central	Private organization
43	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W		Central	Foreign organization
44	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W		Central	Not available
45	Under 30	Vocational training	Full-time employment	B		Central	Not available
46	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W		Central	Private organization
47	Under 30	Bachelor	Self-employment	BO		Central	Private organization
48	Under 30	NG	Full-time employment	B		Central	Not available
49	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W		Central	Public organization
50	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W		Central	Foreign organization
51	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	G		Central	Foreign organization
52	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W		Central	Private organization
53	Under 30	No qualification	Self-employment	BO		Central	Private organization
54	Under 30	Vocational training	Full-time employment	G		Central	Not available
55	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	M		Central	Not available
56	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W		Central	Not available
57	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W		Central	Private organization
58	Under 30	Vocational training	Full-time employment	G		Central	Public organization

59	Under 30	Vocational training	Full-time employment	G	Central	Not available
60	Under 30	No qualification	Full-time employment	B	Central	Not available
61	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	M	Central	Public organization
62	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Private organization
63	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Not available
64	Under 30	Bachelor	Self-employment	BO	Central	Private organization
65	50-60	Bachelor	Full-time employment	M	South	Foreign organization
66	30-40	Bachelor	Portfolio career	E,M	South	Public, private organization
67	30-40	Bachelor	Full-time employment	M	South	Foreign organization
68	30-40	Bachelor	Self-employment	E	South	Private organization
69	30-40	Bachelor	Portfolio career	E,M	South	Foreign, private organization
70	40-50	Bachelor	Portfolio career	M,E	South	Foreign, public organization
71	30-40	Bachelor	Full-time employment	M	South	Foreign organization
72	30-40	Bachelor	Full-time employment	M	South	Foreign, private organization
73	30-40	Master	Full-time employment	W	South	Foreign organization
74	40-50	Bachelor	Full-time employment	M	South	Foreign organization
75	20-30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	South	Private organization
76	20-30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	M	South	Private Organization
77	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	M	Central	Private organization
78	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Not available

79	Under 30	Master	Full-time employment	W	Central	Private organization
80	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Not available
81	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Not available
82	Under 30	Bachelor	Full-time employment	W	Central	Not available
83	Under 30		Full-time employment	G	Central	Not available

(*) W: White collars, G: Grey collars, E: Entrepreneurs, M: Managers, BO: Business owners, B: Blue collars

Appendix 2: Age distribution of participants
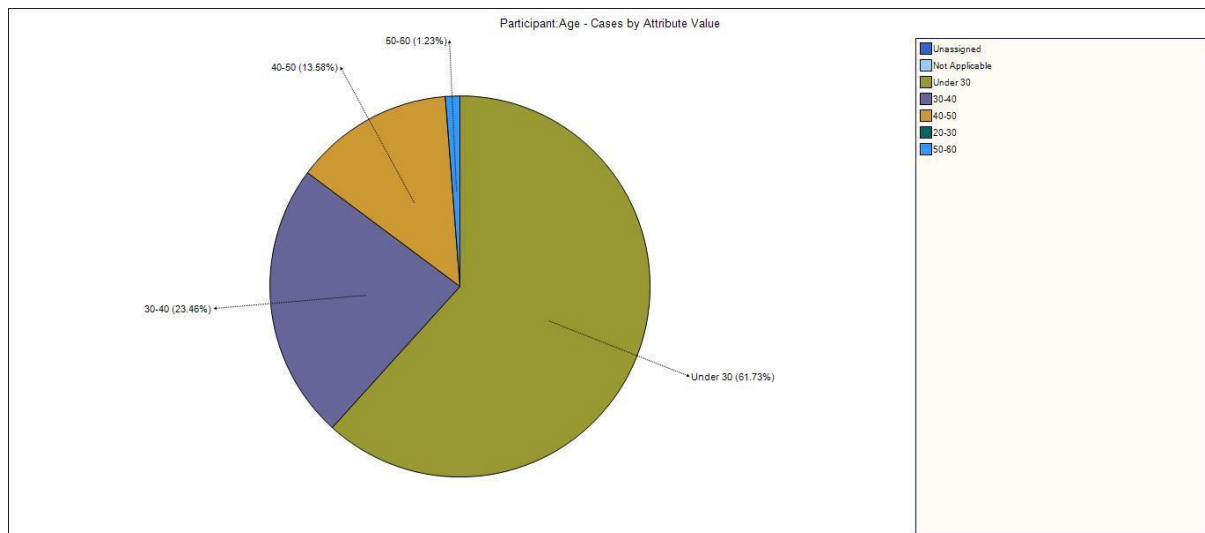
Appendix 3: Participants' area of origin
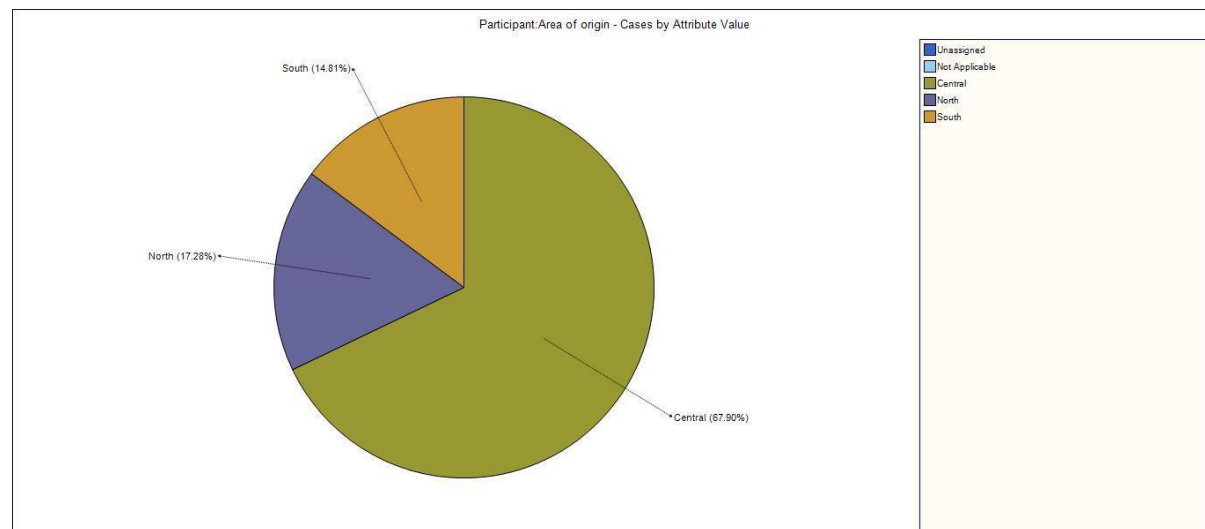
Appendix 4: Education distribution of participants

Participant:Qualification - Cases by Attribute Value

Phd (1.23%)
Master (6.17%)
Unassigned (4.94%)
Vocational training (11.11%)
Bachelor (76.54%)

Legend:
Unassigned
Not Applicable
Bachelor
Vocational training
Master
Phd
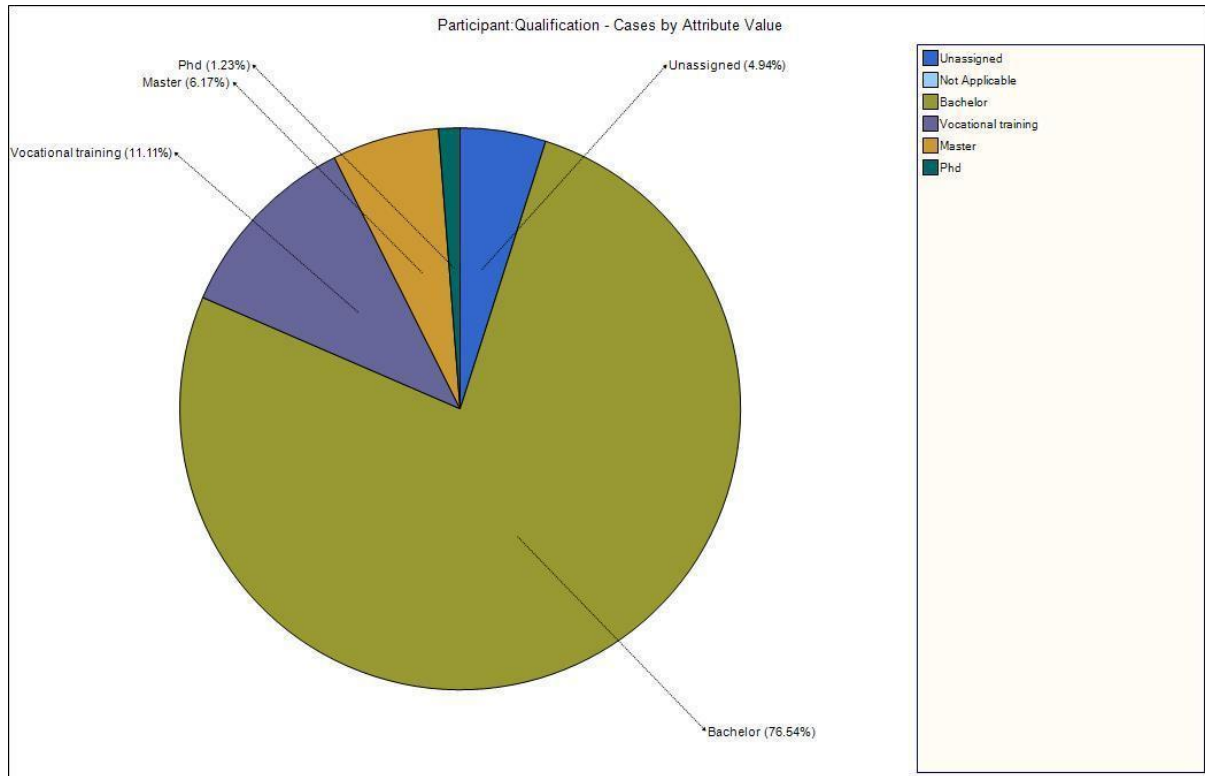
Appendix 5: Occupation distribution of participants

Participant:Type of occupation - Cases by Attribute Value

B (4.94%)
E (7.41%)
BO (9.88%)
E, W (4.94%)
MW (18.52%)
E,MW (7.41%)
G (11.11%)
W (35.80%)

Legend:
Unassigned
Not Applicable
W
G
E,MW
MW
E, W
BO
E
B
W (2)
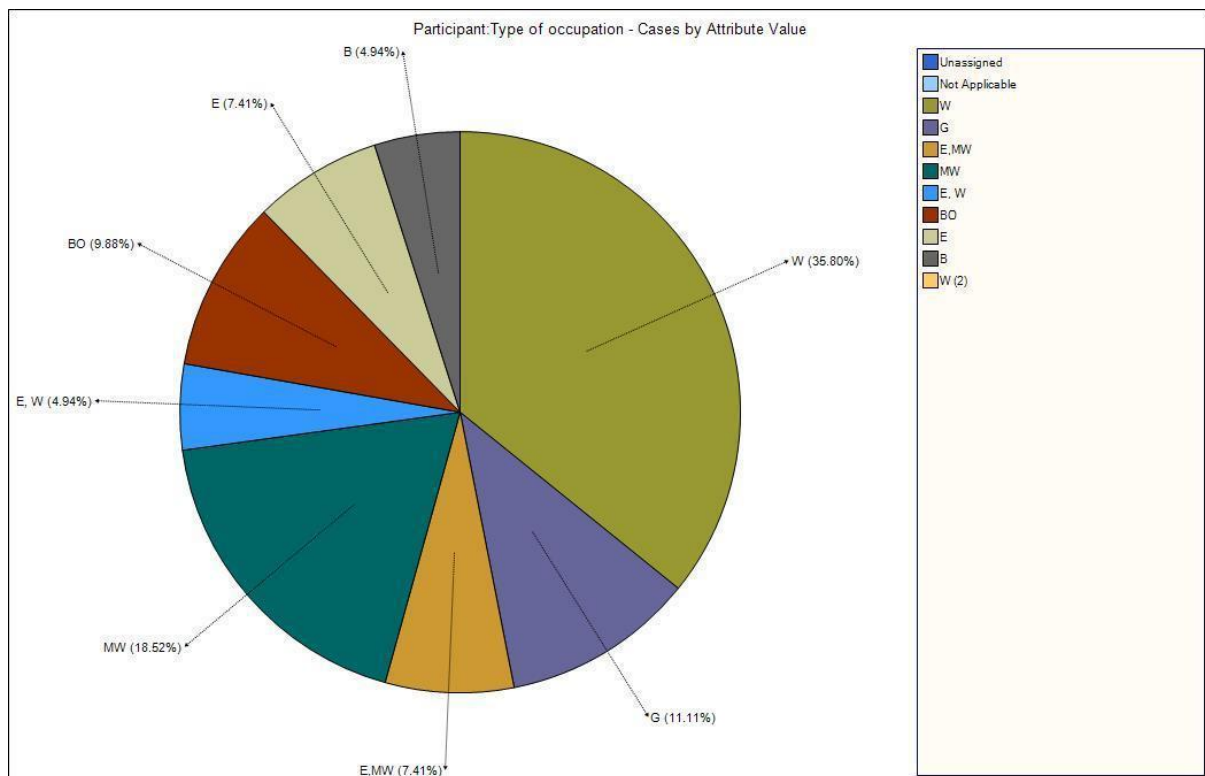
Appendix 6: Participants' type of employment

Participant:Type of employment - Cases by Attribute Value

Unassigned (1.23%)
Self-employment (20.99%)
Portfolio career (14.81%)
Full-time employment (62.96%)

Legend:
- Unassigned
- Not Applicable
- Full-time employment
- Portfolio career
- Self-employment
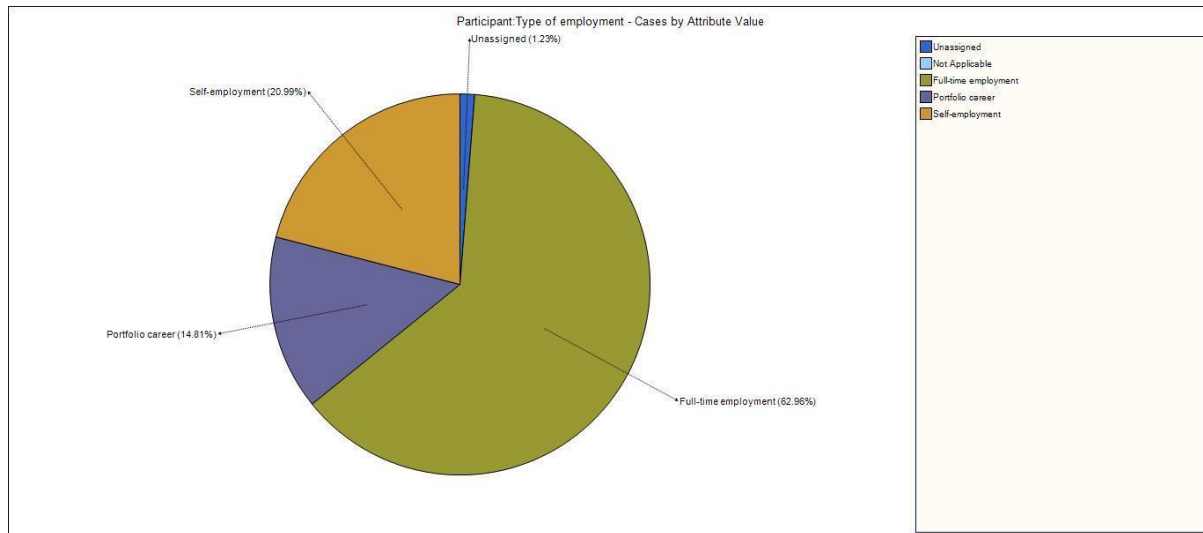
Appendix 7: Research audit trail

The qualitative study aimed to explore the dynamics of individual careers within the career ecosystem in Vietnam. Theoretical and purposive sampling with typical and outlier case selections was applied to identify common and distinctive features of career phenomena among different groups. The data collection process comprised two stages. In the first stage, narrative interviews with 40 proactive careerists were conducted. The first stage was completed when data analysis yielded no new themes. Following an initial analysis of the first set of interviews, four main parts of the interview were then conducted in the second stage. Overall, eighty-three respondents from the North, South, and Central regions of Vietnam participated in the study. A greater number of participants were purposefully selected from the Central region than elsewhere because this area has less advantageous conditions, balancing the optimistic bias in contemporary career literature.

The analysis of all interview transcripts was based on an inductive approach to theory development that involved identifying new themes and patterns and building theory from qualitative data. Saldaña's (2012) coding cycles were used to explore what, how, and why things happen. In the first cycle of coding, attribute, initial, structural, value, evaluation, process, causation, and simultaneous coding were applied, along with various sub-coding techniques. This was then followed by clustering, comparative, and cross case analysis; pattern coding, and interpretation. Two main findings emerged that corresponded to the first two research questions: the most prominent individual career terms, and the interconnectedness and interactions between these terms. The qualitative research process was not a linear one as it involved a back and forth process between theory and data, connecting relevant theories and concepts to corresponding phenomena (the final research question). The audit trail below summarises the reflective nature of the qualitative research.

	Literature review	**Books:** Career choices and development Managing careers: Theory and practice Books on research methods
		Academic papers: Review papers focusing on career theory Contemporary careers Papers on research methods Human resource management, labour market conditions in Vietnam
	Narrative interview	Participants talked about the what, how, and why aspects of their career decisions over their career timeline
	Participant selection	**Criteria:** Proactive individual career management Wide range of occupations Different regions
		Contact points: Professional social networks: LinkedIn, Alphabe. Networks of family and friends. Recommendations from interviewees
	Raw data collection, processing, and storage	Semi-structured interviews Notes and memos Audiotapes Interview transcripts Interview folder in computer and Google Drive NVivo imports
	Data analysis	Word-by-word, line-by-line, paragraph-by-paragraph open coding. Saldana coding manual Code categorisation and classification.
1st stage of qualitative study	Findings and emerging issues	Individual career management process and outcomes Reveal relevance of work characteristics for contemporary careerists Emphasise the significance of the effect of personality and attitudes on contemporary careers Effectiveness of interviewing

		The need to compare and contrast different careerists, especially those who do not practice contemporary careers
2nd stage of qualitative study	Literature review	**Academic papers:** Contemporary career concepts Career ecosystem, career theories, career resources Research methods
	Interview protocol	**Key topics:** Career choices, career goal, managing career, job performance, organisational career management, proactivity, employability, mobility
	Participant selection	**Criteria:** Different types of occupations and employment Proactive and passive careerists in Central Regions Contact points: Friends' network.
	Raw data collection, processing, and storage	Semi-structured interviews Notes and memos Interview transcripts Interview folder in computer and Google Drive NVivo imports
	Data analysis	Word-by-word, line-by-line, paragraph-by-paragraph open coding. Saldana code categorisation and classification.
	Findings and emerging issues	Career goals Proactive and positive careerists vs passive and negative careerists Boundaries of individual careers Different forces in career ecosystems/ systems The need for an integrated analysis of two sets of interviews to see both dark and bright sides
	Literature review	**Books:** The new career Handbook of career theory Career Development and System Theory: Self-determination theory Books on research methods

		Academic papers:
		Career ecosystem and related papers
		Career theories
	Integrated analysis	First and second coding cycles
		Triangulation of data collection
		Coding comparison
		Quotations to illustrate themes
		Visualisation of data analysis
		Feedback from supervisors
	Trustworthiness	Coding matrix
	Case studies and summaries	Appendix 1
	Research report	Conference papers and thesis report

Appendix 8: Memo writing sample

Personality, and attitude

At the beginning, personality and attitude were not included in the proposed contemporary career interview protocol. After the first several interviews, respondents implicitly and explicitly discussed about personality. For example, proactivity were mentioned as the main characteristics of entrepreneurs. Thus, I added personality into interview protocol.

During early stage of qualitative data analysis, I tried to link respondents' description of their personality with relevant theoretical terms. Neither well-known Big Five nor Holland's RAISEC matched with respondents' words. Fortunately, I read academic papers which proposed association between proactivity, and boundaryless career. Proactivity was also discussed by most of participants.

Besides, many contemporary careerists differentiate themselves from other careerists by personality. This interpretation caused me to think of general careerists in Vietnam. I wondered whether these participants could represent the whole career picture in Vietnam. I, then, decided to conduct interviews with a wide range of careerists from Central region to gain a comprehensive understanding of career in Vietnam.

Early qualitative analysis of the second set of interviews revealed that not all careerists displayed their proactivity. People who were inactivated in their individual career were more likely to have negative view of self, colleagues, and organizations. Referring back to previous interviewees, they actually had positive self, other, and organization views. Therefore, positivity was added to coding structure.

Re-examining these positivity and proactivity features in all interview transcripts, I realize that I should also include passivity and conscientiousness to the individual characteristics categories because these two new characteristics would result in very different individual career scenarios. I, finally, came up with following interpretations of personality, and attitude perspectives of career: proactivity, positivity, passivity and conscientiousness.

Appendix 9: Interview preparation documents

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Dynamics of individual careers in Vietnam

Invitation

You are invited to take part in a research study assessing individual careers in Vietnam. The aim of this research is to identify the most prominent individual career phenomena and explore the interconnectedness and interactions among these phenomena. Findings from this study may be beneficial for future career counselling activities in Vietnam. To enable the practical contributions of this research to be implemented, it is essential that reliable data is collected. For this purpose, you are invited to participate in this research by completing this questionnaire.

What will happen?

You will be asked to take part in open talks between participants and researchers regarding the different perspectives people have on their individual careers. Any information you disclose will be used only for the purposes of this research.

Participants' rights

You may decide to stop your participation at any time. You have the right to ask that any data supplied to that point be withdrawn or destroyed. Please feel free to ask questions at any point. If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

Benefits and risks

This study poses no known risks. It does not provide any tangible benefits beyond advancing scientific knowledge and effectiveness of career counselling activities in Viet Nam.

Confidentiality/anonymity

The information will be coded and kept confidential on a password protected computer where it will be added to a large database that will be analysed at regional level only. The data may be presented at conferences and in academic publications; however, we will only present data averaged over many participants.

For further information

I will be happy to answer your questions about this study at any time and can inform you about the results of the study once data collection is complete. You may contact me via mobile phone: +84 93 591 8588 or by email: hangtvtran@gmail.com.

INDIVIDUAL CAREER DYNAMICS
Stage 1: Narrative interview
Would you please share your career story? You may start from your first job to your current job. I would like to learn specifically about what, why and how you manage your career.
Stage 2: Semi-structured interview
Would you please tell me something about your work and career experience?
- What was your first job and what was the job involved?
- Why did you choose to work for that job and that organization? Income/ promotion/ advancement/ development/ security and so on?
- How did you learn to perform the job?
- Were there any challenges of the tasks? How did you overcome difficulties during the job fulfilment process?
- How did you adapt to the job and the work environment?
- Did you receive support from your supervisor and colleagues? How did they support you?
- How was your performance/ productivity compared to your colleagues?
- What jobs followed your first job (career progression so far)?
- If moved, why; if stayed, why
- How do to describe your personality? Is it helpful for your work?
- How do you feel about your employability?

Appendix 10: Coding Hierarchy

Description	Category	Construct
Developmental, financial, physical, psychological constraints, market constraints, lay-off, work-life conflict	Work constraints	Work characteristics
Physical requirement, individual characteristics, job-related skills	Work requirement	Work characteristics
Developmental resource, employability benefits, financial, physical, psychological resource, market opportunities, social capital, work-life balance	Work support & benefits	Work characteristics
Running a business, making specific products or services	Entrepreneurial goals	Career goals
Having a happy family and a good job	Life work congruence	Career goals
Lacking clear and unambiguous goals	No goal	Career goals
Achieving extrinsic rewards	Objective goals	Career goals
Achieving intrinsic rewards	Subjective goals	Career goals
Mobility within employed organisations and mobility outside employed organisations	Mobility	Mobility
Staying within employed organisations or one-owned organisations	Non-mobility	Mobility
Formal or informal learning		Learning
Feeling satisfied with current situation	Satisfaction	Satisfaction
Feeling not satisfied with current situation	Not satisfaction	Satisfaction
Tendency tolerate and care of surrounding people and environment	Conscientious-ness	Individual characteristics
Tendency to let it go	Passive	Individual characteristics
Tendency to think on the bright side	Positive	Individual characteristics
Tendency to control situation and/ or make things happen	Proactive	Individual characteristics
Work-efficiency benchmark against others co-workers and/or against the past efficiency		Performance
Tendency to make decision following one's goals		Self-direction
Establish, maintain and develop relationships with relevant stakeholders		Networking

Tendency to develop one's career within particular occupation	→ Bounded orientation	↘
Tendency to develop one's career within and outside occupational boundary	→ Boundary-crossing	Occupational orientation ↗
Commit to one's entrepreneurial and/ or portfolio career	→ Career commitment	↘
Commit to a particular occupation	→ Occupational commitment	→ Commitment
Commit to a particular organisation	→ Organisational commitment	↗
High probability of getting an alternative and/or better job	→ High Employability	↘
Moderate probability of getting an alternative and/or better job	→ Moderate employability	→ Employability
Low probability of getting an alternative and/or better job	→ Low employability	↗
Making specific plan for one's career	→ Planning	
Taking advantage of existing or potential opportunities	→ Opportunity taking	
Addressing emerging problems	→ Problem solving	
Accumulating and raising capital for one's business	→ Capital mobilization	
Avoid making any change	→ Change resistance	
Unable to make career decision	→ Indecisiveness	

Appendix 11: Document for quantitative data collection

Southampton
Business School

Room 3059, Building 2

Southampton Business School

The University of Southampton

University Road, Southampton

SO17 1BJ

Mobile: +84(0)935 918 588 (VN)

www.sbs.ac.uk

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am a lecturer at Da Nang University of Economics, University of Danang and a doctoral student at Southampton Business School, The University of Southampton, UK. I am inviting you to take part in a study exploring the potential effects of contextual and individual determinants on individual careers. It is anticipated that the findings will be beneficial for future career counselling activities in Vietnam. Thus, it is essential that reliable data is collected. Your participation in this study will be invaluable in in contributing to the quality of the research findings.

Specifically, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire. This should only take about 10 minutes of your time. If there is a question that does not apply to you, please choose the response that is closest to your circumstances. All the information you provide will remain confidential.

If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, please feel free to ask me. I will also be happy to answer any questions you may have about this research at any time and can inform you of the results of the study once data collection is complete. You may contact me via mobile phone: +84 93 591 8588 or email: hangtvtran@gmail.com.

Please find enclosed the questionnaire.

Thank you ,

Tran Thi Hang

CAREER

Thank you for participating in this research. It is important that you answer as accurately as you can. In most cases, you will be given a range from 1 to 5 where 1 refers to strongly disagree and 5 refers to strongly agree. You will be asked to choose the one that fits best. Even though none of the answers may fit your ideas exactly, choosing the response closest to your views will enable me to compare your answers more easily with those of other people. If you are unclear about what is required, please ask me.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please provide contact information
Name:
Email:
Phone:

*Finally, would you please indicate how satisfied you are with your current job and organisation*

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Not at all   ***Totally***

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Being able to keep busy all the time					
The chance to work alone on the job					
The chance to do different things from time to time					
The chance to be 'somebody' in the community					
The way my boss handles his/her workers					
The competence of my supervisor in making decisions					
Being able to do things that don't go against my conscience					
The way my job provides steady employment					
The change to do things for other people					
The chance to tell people what to do					
The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities					
The way company policies are put into practice					
My pay and the amount of work I do					
The chances to try my own methods					
The freedom to use my own judgment					
The working conditions					
The way my co-workers get along with each other					

|					
The praise I get for doing a good job					
The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job					

INDIVIDUAL CAREER MANAGEMENT

In this section, please indicate your opinions on your career orientation

1	2	3	4	5

Strongly Disagree   **Strongly Agree**
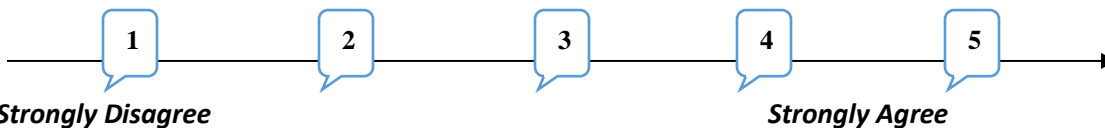
Statement	1	2	3	4	5
For me, career success refers to how I am doing in terms of my goals and values					
I navigate my own career, mostly according to my plan(s)					
If I have to find a new job, it will be easy					
I am in charge of my own career					
I take responsibility for my own development					
Freedom and autonomy are driving forces in my career					
For me, career success means having flexibility in my job					

In this section, please indicate your opinions on your career management

1	2	3	4	5

Strongly disagree   **Strongly agree**
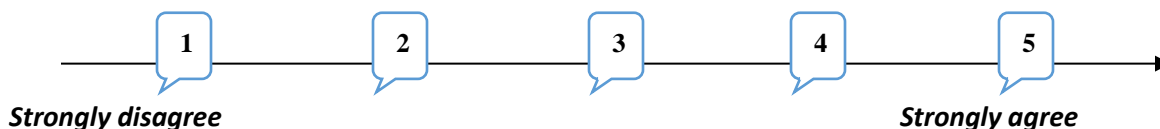
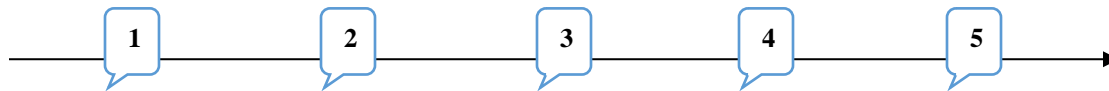| Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Learn as much as possible from my job.					
Understand the content of my job as thoroughly as possible.					
Have gained a broader and deeper knowledge of my job when I am done with each task.					
Completely master my job.					

I prefer a task that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn.					
I prefer task that really challenges me so I can learn new things.					

In this section, please indicate your opinions on your employability

1   2   3   4   5

Strongly Disagree   **Strongly Agree**

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I am optimistic that I would find another job if I looked for one					
I will easily find another job if I lose this job					
I could easily switch to another employer if I wanted to					
I am confident that I could quickly get a similar job					

In this section, please indicate your future mobility preferences

1   2   3   4   5

Strongly Disagree   **Strongly Agree**

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I like the predictability that comes with working continuously for the same organisation					
I would feel very lost if I couldn't work for my current organisation					
I prefer to stay in a company I am familiar with rather than look for employment elsewhere					
If my organisation provided lifetime employment, I would never desire to seek work in other organisations					
If it was my ideal career, I would work for only one organisation					

Thank you very much for your cooperation, your consideration, and your time.

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Appendix 12: Document for 2nd quantitative data collection

Southampton Business School

Room 3059, Building 2

Southampton Business School

The University of Southampton

University Road, Southampton

SO17 1BJ

Mobile: +84(0)935 918 588 (VN)

www.sbs.ac.uk

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am a lecturer at Da Nang University of Economics, University of Danang and a doctoral student at Southampton Business School, The University of Southampton, UK. I am inviting you to take part in a study exploring the potential effects of contextual and individual determinants on individual careers. It is anticipated that the findings will be beneficial for future career counselling activities in Vietnam. Thus, it is essential that reliable data is collected. Your participation in this study will be invaluable in in contributing to the quality of the research findings.

Specifically, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire. This should only take about 20 minutes of your time. If there is a question that does not apply to you, please choose the response that is closest to your circumstances. All the information you provide will remain confidential.

If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, please feel free to ask me. I will also be happy to answer any questions you may have about this research at any time and can inform you of the results of the study once data collection is complete. You may contact me via mobile phone: +84 93 591 8588 or email: hangtvtran@gmail.com.

Please find enclosed the questionnaire.

Thank you ,

Tran Thi Hang

CAREER

Thank you for participating in this research. It is important that you answer as accurately as you can. In most cases, you will be given a range from 1 to 5 where 1 refers to strongly disagree and 5 refers to strongly agree. You will be asked to choose the one that fits best. Even though none of the answers may fit your ideas exactly, choosing the response closest to your views will enable me to compare your answers more easily with those of other people. If you are unclear about what is required, please ask me.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Firstly, please provide the following general demographic information
Age:
Area of origin:
Education:
Type of employment:
Type of occupation:
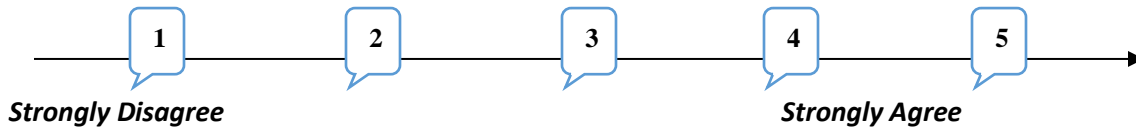*Please provide contact information (if possible)*
Name:
Email:
Phone:

PROACTIVITY AND POSITIVITY

*In this section, please indicate your opinions regarding your proactivity and positivity*

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
If I see something I don't like, I fix it					
No matter what the odds, if I believe in something, I will make it happen					
I love being a champion for my ideas, even against the' opposition of others					
I am always looking for better ways to do things					
If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen					
I excel at identifying opportunities					
I have great faith in the future					
Others are generally here for me when I need them					
I am satisfied with my life					
At times, the future seems unclear to me					
I generally feel confident in myself					
I look forward to the future with hope and enthusiasm					

	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I have many things to be proud of					
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself					

INDIVIDUAL CAREER

In this section, please indicate your opinions on your career orientation

Strongly Disagree   **Strongly Agree**
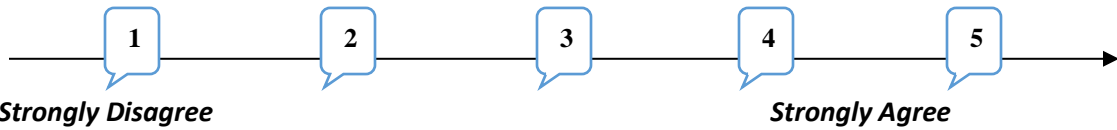
Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I seek job assignments that allow me to learn something new					
I would enjoy working on projects with people across many organisations					
I enjoy job assignments that require me to work outside of the organisation					
I like tasks at work that require me to interact with people in many different organisations					
I have sought opportunities in the past that allow me to work outside the organisation					
I am energised in new experiences and situations					
I like tasks that require me to work beyond my own department					
I enjoy working with people outside of my organisation					

In this section, please indicate your opinions on your employability

Strongly Disagree   **Strongly Agree**

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I am optimistic that I would find another job if I looked for one					
I will easily find another job if I lose this job					
I could easily switch to another employer if I wanted to					

I am confident that I could quickly get a similar job					

In this section, please indicate your opinions on your current career

Strongly Disagree   ***Strongly Agree***

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
If I could get another job different from this one that paid the same amount, I would probably take it					
I definitely want a career for myself in my current area					
If I could do it all over again, I would not choose to work in this profession					
If I had all the money I need without working, I would probably still continue in this profession					
I like this vocation too much to give it up					

Thank you very much for your cooperation, your consideration, and your time.

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