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Sustainable careers within contextual boundaries

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TO EMPLOYABILITY AND BEYOND:

SUSTAINABLE CAREERS WITHIN CONTEXTUAL BOUNDARIES

SUMMARY

The sustainable career is a career characterized by continuity over time and varying circumstances in a way that enables individuals to live productively, happily, and healthily. Because labor market trends such as growing flexibilization, technologization, and polarization between low and high skilled jobs impact individuals' employability, productivity, happiness and health, organizations and policy makers alike are increasingly recognizing the importance of understanding the drivers of sustainable careers.

Therefore, across three empirical chapters, the current dissertation focuses on answering the question of what individuals can do to sustain their careers against the backdrop of changing demands in their jobs, occupations, and broader labor markets. First, we investigate which personal resources they can apply to sustain their careers and how they can apply them. Second, we focus on disentangling the role of individuals and broader institutional opportunities and barriers in sustaining careers by answering the question of when personal resources are instrumental for sustaining careers, and when they are not.

To this end, Chapter 2 offers a conceptual overview and a meta-analysis (k=127; n=69,301) of the relationships between different resources that individuals can rely on and perceived employability (i.e., perceived chance of obtaining, maintaining, or changing employment), as well as the relationships between perceived employability and sustainable career outcomes. The results demonstrate that personal resources such as higher protean career orientation, career adaptability, proactive personality, psychological, human, and social capital, as well as organizational resources including HRM practices, supervisory support, autonomy, and job security all contribute to individual employability perceptions. Moreover, perceived employability further shows positive relationships with employee productivity (i.e., job performance, career success, work engagement) and health (i.e., positive wellbeing, burnout, psychological distress). In addition, we evidence some differences in the strength of the relationships between different resources and sustainable careers as a function of the broader institutional context (i.e., unemployment, employment protection legislation, and national culture). On the one hand, contextual factors appear to strengthen the relationship between personal resources and sustainable career outcomes. On the other hand, contextual factors might also represent a barrier or a threat that weakens the relationships between resources and sustainable career outcomes. To offer further insight into the role of context in bounding career sustainability in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 we examine personal resources used to

sustain careers in two peculiar and not much investigated contexts of nurses and recently resettled refugees.

The results of Chapter 3 demonstrate that nursing professionals, who are characterized by higher career adapt-ability (a self-regulatory competence measured in terms of four adaptability resources: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence) are more likely to be rated by their supervisors as more employable and as being higher performers. Specifically, nurses who are more adaptable reach higher levels of performance because they proactively engage in developing new skills and attain higher levels of employability because they proactively engage in planning their careers.

The results of Chapter 4 show that even under circumstances of major life transitions, such as the experience of being a refugee in a new country, individuals rely on their personal resources to reestablish their careers. Based on data collected from a sample of Syrian refugees in Greece and the Netherlands we show that refugees with higher psychological capital (i.e., hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy) demonstrate higher confidence in searching for work. In addition, the relationship between psychological capital and job search self-efficacy through career adaptability was found to be stronger when refugees experience higher administrative barriers in the host country. Instead, when refugees experience high social barriers the relationship between psychological capital and job search self-efficacy through career adaptability is weaker.

Overall, the studies in this dissertation underscore the importance of psychological capital and/or career adaptability as two different individual self-regulatory resources that support career sustainability in different contexts and under diverse circumstances. In addition, broader contextual factors also appear to have an impact on individual careers, by representing a barrier or an opportunity to mobilizing specific personal resources.

NAAR INZETBAARHEID EN VERDER: DUURZAME LOOPBANEN BINNEN CONTEXTUELE GRENZEN

SAMENVATTING

Naar inzetbaarheid en verder:

Een duurzame carrière is een carrière die gekenmerkt wordt door continuïteit in de tijd en wisselende omstandigheden op een manier die individuen in staat stelt om productief, gelukkig en gezond te leven. Omdat trends op de arbeidsmarkt zoals toenemende flexibilisering, technologisering en polarisatie tussen laag- en hooggekwalificeerde banen invloed hebben op de inzetbaarheid, de productiviteit, het geluk en de gezondheid van het individu, erkennen zowel organisaties als beleidsmakers in toenemende mate het belang van het begrijpen van wat een carrière duurzaam.

Daarom richt het huidige proefschrift zich in drie empirische hoofdstukken op het beantwoorden van de vraag wat individuen kunnen doen om hun carrière te bestendigen tegen de achtergrond van veranderende eisen in hun banen, beroepen en de bredere arbeidsmarkt; dat wil zeggen, welke persoonlijke hulpbronnen ze kunnen toepassen en hoe. Daarnaast onderzoeken we de rol van individuen en de bredere institutionele hulpbronnen en barrières en geven antwoord op de vraag wanneer persoonlijke hulpbronnen bijdragen aan een duurzame carrière en wanneer niet.

De meta-analyse over de antecedenten en uitkomsten van gepercipieerde inzetbaarheid (k=127; n=69,301) welke gepresenteerd wordt in hoofdstuk 2, toont in dit verband aan dat persoonlijke hulpbronnen, zoals een meer flexibele loopbaanoriëntatie, aanpassingsvermogen, proactieve persoonlijkheid, psychologisch, menselijk en sociaal kapitaal, evenals organisatorische hulpbronnen, waaronder HRM-praktijken, steun van leidinggevende(n), autonomie en werkzekerheid, allemaal bijdragen aan de individuele inzetbaarheidsperceptie (d.w.z. de gepercipieerde kans op verkrijgen, behouden, of veranderen van een baan). Bovendien blijkt gepercipieerde inzetbaarheid van werknemers een positieve relatie heeft met de productiviteit en gezondheid van de werknemer. We tonen ook enkele verschillen aan in de sterkte van de relaties tussen individuele hulpbronnen en duurzame carrières, die te maken hebben met de bredere institutionele context. Enerzijds lijken contextuele factoren (d.w.z. werkloosheid, arbeidsbeschermingswetgeving en cultuur) individuen te stimuleren om hun carrière voort te zetten. Anderzijds kunnen contextuele factoren ook een belemmering of bedreiging vormen voor de duurzaamheid van individuele loopbanen.

De resultaten van hoofdstuk 3 laten zien dat verpleegkundigen met een hoger vermogen zich aan te passen aan hun loopbaan (het zelfregulerend

vermogen gemeten in termen van de vier aanpassingshulpbronnen: zorg, controle, nieuwsgierigheid en vertrouwen) door hun leidinggevenden eerder worden beoordeeld als meer inzetbaar en beter presterend. Verpleegkundigen met een groter aanpassingsvermogen bereiken een hoger prestatieniveau omdat zij zich proactief richten op de ontwikkeling van nieuwe vaardigheden en een hogere inzetbaarheid omdat zij zich proactief richten op de planning van hun loopbaan.

De resultaten van hoofdstuk 4 laten zien dat zelfs wanneer er sprake is van een grote levensovergang, zoals het geval is bij vluchtelingen die zich vestigen in een nieuw land, individuen afhankelijk zijn van hun persoonlijke hulpbronnen om hun carrière weer op de baan te krijgen. Op basis van data die zijn verzameld in een steekproef van Syrische vluchtelingen in Griekenland en Nederland laten we zien dat vluchtelingen met een hoger psychologisch kapitaal (d.w.z. hoop, optimisme, veerkracht en zelfredzaamheid) een groter vertrouwen hebben in het zoeken naar werk.. Bovendien blijkt de relatie tussen psychologisch kapitaal en zelfredzaamheid bij het zoeken naar werk door middel van het vermogen zich aan te passen aan de loopbaan sterker te zijn voor die vluchtelingen die in het gastland grotere administratieve barrières ervaren. Wanneer vluchtelingen echter grotere sociale barrières ervaren, is de relatie tussen psychologisch kapitaal en het vermogen tot zelfredzaamheid bij het zoeken naar een baan door middel van het vermogen zich aan te passen aan de loopbaan zwakker.

In het algemeen onderstrepen de studies in dit proefschrift het belang van psychologisch kapitaal en/of het vermogen zich aan te passen aan de loopbaan als twee verschillende individuele zelfregulerende hulpbronnen die de duurzaamheid van de loopbaan in verschillende contexten en onder uiteenlopende omstandigheden ondersteunen. Daarnaast hebben bredere contextuele factoren impact op individuele carrières, doordat ze een barrière of een kans vormen om specifieke persoonlijke hulpbronnen te mobiliseren.

List of Authors

The empirical chapters presented in this dissertation were designed by S. Pajic, who acted as lead in study design, data collection, data analysis, and writing of the manuscript. S. T. Mol and D. N. den Hartog contributed to design of the empirical studies and to the writing of the manuscript by providing valuable comments. G. Kismihók contributed to the design and data collection in the empirical studies presented within Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. All co-authors recognize S. Pajic as lead author of all the chapters reported in this dissertation.

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The sustainable career is a career characterized by the continuity of employment over time and changeable circumstances in a way that enables individuals to live productive, happy, and healthy lives. This dissertation focuses on answering the question of how individuals sustain their careers against the backdrop of varying opportunities and barriers within broader institutional context. First, it investigates which resources individuals use to sustain their careers and how they use them. Second, it explores under which conditions are these resources instrumental for sustaining careers, and under which they are not.

The dissertation presents three empirical chapters. The first empirical chapter provides a meta-analysis of the relationships between a number of the personal and organizational resources, and sustainable careers across contexts. The following chapters offer further insight into career sustainability within two specific groups, nurses in Hungary and Syrian refugees recently resettled in Greece and the Netherlands.

The results demonstrate the value of personal resources, such are career adaptability and psychological capital, for sustaining careers across contexts. However, broader institutional factors, such as different unemployment rates, employment protection legislation, and national culture, might represent a barrier or an opportunity to mobilizing specific resources.