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## Millennials' Career Attitudes: The Roles of Career Anchors and Psychological Empowerment

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### Abstract

This study examines the mediating effect Millennials' psychological empowerment perceptions on the relationship between their career anchors (technical/functional competence, general managerial competence, autonomy/independence, security/stability, entrepreneurial creativity, service/dedication to a cause, pure challenge and life style) and career attitudes. Participants were 492 engineers who are working in different Information Technology companies. The results indicate a significant relationship between Millennials' psychological empowerment and their protean career attitudes. Hierarchical regression analyses show that the relationships between career anchors (autonomy, security, entrepreneurial creativity, service and pure challenge) and Millennials' protean career attitudes are partially mediated by their psychological empowerment perceptions. The findings reveal that organizations should focus more on giving importance to empowerment mechanisms for Millennials that is the underlying effect between their career anchors and career attitudes.

**Keywords:** Millennials, Career Anchors, Psychological Empowerment, Career Attitudes.

### Introduction

Globalization, World Financial Crisis on 2008/2009, technological advances, demographic shifts and changes in the workplace over the past decade have induced a rise in the studies for contemporary career attitudes that are characterized by increased self-directedness, autonomy and flexibility. In this context, protean career attitude that involves greater mobility, a more whole-life perspective and a developmental progression has been suggested as the most convenient coping trait to all of these uncertain career scenarios (Gubler, Arnold & Coombs, 2014; Hall, 2002). The traditional career perspectives have been subsequently replaced by protean career that may realize the changing scenarios in a better manner (Bridges, 1995). Protean careers involve both a value-driven and self-directed perspective toward career management in which employees become the owners of their own careers instead of the organizational career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996).

The concept of “generations” has been studied for many years in sociological theories. Members of the same generation share similar age, common experiences and display similar characteristics and behavioral patterns. Millennials (1981-1995) represent a unique generation that shares different work values, beliefs and career attitudes when compared with previous generations (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Millennials are technologically savvy as they have grown up in an era characterized by rapid technological advancements and increased globalization (Burke & Ng, 2006). They tend to be satisfied by the career advancements more than Generation X (1965-1980), Baby Boomers (1947-1964) and Traditionalists (1900-1946). Nonetheless, they are not loyal to their organizations, thereby less willing to remain with the same organization (Westerman & Yamamura, 2007). On the other hand, meaningful work, learning opportunities and career development have great importance for Millennials. Because of the uncertainty in the world environment and increased terrorism, security and stability are critical for Millennials. By 2020, Millennials will make up fifty percent of the global workforce (PwC, 2011). Millennials care more about career development than previous generations. They view career more than just money and title, and value larger meaning and purpose in their work. Despite of the studies about work values and career attitudes, there has been little attention on the factors influencing career attitudes of Millennials employees (Sullivan, Forret, Carraher & Mainiero, 2009). Protean careers have been suggested as the most prevalent attitudes among the Millennials (Lyons, Ng & Schweitzer, 2012). The changes in the career attitudes of employees in the twenty-first century allude to the need for a better understanding of the career progress of the Millennials. In this regard the below essential research question arises:

*RQ.* What are the main factors influencing the Millennials’ career attitudes?

A critical element in viewing career attitudes is the career anchor, which represents the individual’s career related self-concept that guides his or her attitudes through the career development. Individuals hold a wide variety of career interests and these career anchors may also influence employees’ job performance and overall organizational effectiveness (Schein, 1978). Additionally, career anchors affect individuals’ career choices, their decisions to move from one job to another and influence their reactions to their work experiences. Individuals may pursue different types of careers such that one can value independence while the other can give importance on security (Schein, 1975). Subsequently, the compatibility between an employee’s desires and job settings result in higher levels of career satisfaction and lower intentions to leave the job (Igbaria, Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1991). Thus, work outcomes such as increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment levels can be achieved through a better understanding of career orientations to work that are shaped by career anchors (Naghypour & Galavandi, 2015). Yet little research to date has specifically investigated the effects of employees’ career anchors on their career attitudes. Thus, the present research aims to examine the processes of how Millennials’ career anchors influence their career attitudes.

Career anchor is crucial for the understanding of especially intrinsic motivation in the workplace (Quigley & Tymon, 2006). The concern of motivational variables in the careers literature has been discussed (Bandura, 1997; Hackman & Oldham; 1980; King, 2004) in some degree without having a unified theoretical frame. In this manner, Thomas and Velthouse’s (1990) theory of intrinsic motivation can be examined in order to better understand of the

connections between intrinsic motivation and career self-management (Quigley & Tymon, 2006). Intrinsic motivation comprises positively valued experiences that individuals get directly from their work tasks (Thomas & Tymon, 1997). Psychological empowerment (PE) that is defined as the motivational concept of self-efficacy (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) is an increased intrinsic motivation reflecting the individual's orientation to his/her work role (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). PE plays an important role on employees' job satisfaction that is a crucial concern in today's global surrounding (Aydogmus, Camgoz, Ergeneli & Ekmekci, 2017). Research provides evidence that PE enhances Millennials' career competencies and satisfaction, thus helps in managing them (Kong, Sun & Yan, 2016). Once Millennials employees are trusted and empowered, they tend to perform better in both their job and career. Millennials' PE perceptions mediate the relationship between their emotional intelligence competencies and interpersonal citizenship behaviors at work (Aydogmus, 2016). A proper career system is also reflected by employees' PE perceptions to actively manage their career developments (Quigley & Tymon, 2006). The emphasis on the concepts of career anchors and career attitudes parallel recent research on PE (Hall & Moss, 1998) and it is important to explore psychologically empowered Millennials because of its essential role on employees' job satisfaction. Nevertheless, empirical evidence is scant and there has been lack of research that examines the underlying mechanism and processes of how Millennials' career anchors influence their career attitudes, with a focus on their PE. Thus, the aim of this study is to explore these causal progressions by concentrating on Millennials' PE. Particularly, this study proposes and tests an integrative model that considers Millennials' career anchors and PE perceptions as the predictors of protean career attitudes (PCA). Such inquiry is important such that it examines a mediated relationship that reflects a process of associating Millennials' career anchors to their attitudes. PE is examined as the specific mediator for the reason that Millennials' career anchors may influence their empowerment, and thus shape their career attitudes.

## **Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses**

### **Career Anchors and Career Attitudes**

The decline of the traditional career perspectives exposes new approaches in observing careers. In the twenty-first century, protean career attitudes have become popular in the career development process for both the managers and the subordinates (Briscoe, Hall & DeMuth, 2006). The term *protean* was derived from *proteus* that is a Latin word referred as an individual capability to adjust the shape of something in dealing with uncertainty. Protean careers attitudes have two fundamental structures as being values-driven and self-driven. A values-driven approach denotes the high consciousness of the employee towards his or her personal priorities. Employees with such a perspective are aware of their career achievement accompanied by the consideration of the organizational priorities and use their values to guide their career. On the other hand, self-direction identifies the degree to which an employee takes the control of his or her career strategically and has independent roles in managing his or her career behavior (Briscoe & Hall, 2006).

The new structures adopted by the organizations such as network organizations in which mental capabilities are considered rather than physical abilities (Miles & Snow, 1986), lean organizations that requires knowledge workers like engineers (Crawford, 1989), cellular

minimalist organizations that exist to support the activities of entrepreneurial professionals (Allred, Snow & Miles, 1996), thus the flattening of corporate hierarchies have caused changes for the career development. In order to better understand PCA, employees' *career anchors* may be considered as useful tools that help to employees to enhance the level of recognition about their career developments and to make effective career planning. The concept of career anchor, which is based on the fact that employees shape their careers in diverse manners according to their own perceptions of their talents, needs and values, is crucial in the career development literature (Schein, 1990). A career anchor as defined by Schein (1975, 1978, and 1996) is a self-concept of a person that provides direction for his or her career values, desires and interests. Schein's research (1978, 1996) showed that individuals' self-concepts revolved around eight anchor categories as follows:

a) *Technical/functional competence*: Predominantly excited by the opportunities to apply skills in a technical or a functional area and develop those skills to a higher level.

b) *General managerial competence*: The skills of general management such as emotional, analytical and inter-personal competence; ability to build and manage a team.

c) *Autonomy/Independence*: Predominantly motivated by the opportunities to define work in one's own way.

d) *Security/Stability*: Seeks for employment security for a job and desires to be fully socialized into organization's values.

e) *Entrepreneurial creativity*: Predominantly excited by the opportunities for creating something that is interested in starting new activities at a job.

f) *Service/Dedication to a cause*: Seeks work activities associated with personal values such as helping to society and solving environmental issues.

g) *Pure Challenge*: Predominantly motivated to solve almost insoluble problems and overcome tough cases.

h) *Lifestyle*: Seeks situations that allow the integration of personal and family needs with the requirements for the job.

Schein (1990) posits that each individual characterizes mainly with one or two of these anchor categories and these categories will be the catalysts for the individual to seek after the preferences for their jobs. Feldman and Bolino (1996) specify that an individual's career anchor consists of three main groups namely as: (a) self-perceived talents; the work that people perform day by day; (b) attitudes and values; related to the ways people identify with their occupations and organizational cultures; and (c) motives and needs that pertain to an individual's career. Within Schein's eight anchor categories; technical competence, managerial competence and entrepreneurial creativity belong to self-perceived talent group of anchors, whereas service/dedication and challenge concern with self-attitudes and values of a person. Finally, autonomy/independence, security/stability, and lifestyle anchor categories represent motives and needs for an individual's career (Feldman & Bolino, 1996).

Millennials are ambitious, technologically savvy, thus they are more likely to be self-centered and achievement oriented (Krahn & Galambos, 2014). They are highly mobile and expect great change and variety in their work assignments. Furthermore, they place great

emphasis on their work and life balance and have a tendency to make their career decisions that may limit their career in favor of their lifestyles (Ng & Gossett, 2013). They also display high self-esteem and individualistic tendencies and they are socially conscious (Twenge, 2010). Thus, it might be expected that Millennials are more likely to have high technical/functional competence, autonomy, pure challenge and life style career anchors.

Employees' career anchors, their perceptions about their professional preferences influence their choices, decisions about changing their jobs and their reactions towards work, thus their career attitudes (Silva, Trevisan, Veloso & Dutra, 2016). Career anchors act as important motivational elements for shaping the employees' career attitudes. Over time, employees discover a dominant career anchor that drives their career attitudes (Schein, 1990). Nevertheless, research has provided evidence of a multiple profiles comprising of a primary, secondary and even tertiary career anchors that may have an effect on different career attitudes (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2008; Feldman & Bolino, 1996; Wils, Wils & Tremblay, 2010). Employees are changing their career values and they become more willing to take the control of their careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Protean careers emphasize autonomy, challenge and entrepreneurial creativity of employees in advancing their career interests (Hudson & Inkson, 2006). All of these career anchors are related with openness to change driven by self-directed values (Wils et al., 2010). Besides increased global mobility has caused employees to seek jobs that allow them to exercise a wider range of their interests and talents (Haley-Lock, 2008). Additionally, employees' concerns for job security and stability have shifted to lifestyle concerns since 1990. Both of these career anchors are inter-related with values of conservation (Wils et al., 2010). As predicted for 2020s, work places will become more hyper-connected and virtual environments that provide personalized experiences due to the digital revolution. Such changes in global markets and mobile technology will allow employees to use their self-directed and values-driven incentives in order to choose how, when and where they work (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). Subsequently, employees' concerns about their work and life flexibility (security and lifestyle) will rise as they pursue ways to manage both their work and personal lives in a better manner according to their self-directed values (Coetzee, & Schreuder, 2014). Furthermore, Suutri and Taka (2004) determined that one of the most common anchors related with globalism is managerial competence. Managerial competence is related with self-enhancement that is required in a continuous learning process (Wils et al., 2010). In protean careers, development of employee can be achieved by continuous learning (Hall, 2002).

The increasing emphasis on social responsibility, global and moral citizenship in the twenty-first century causes a shift to the service/dedication anchor that is relevant to self-transcendence, as for either a primary or secondary career orientation (Coetzee, 2012; Peiperl & Jonsen, 2007). Technological competence, the anchor related to the employees' work talents, is also concerned with self-transcendence. One of the steps in promoting successful protean careers is the integration of technology with career development progress (Hall, 2002). Besides independence/autonomy, assertiveness, flexibility and social responsibility features are appropriate for protean career that focuses on continuous learning, self-direction and choices based on personal values (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Independent employees are self-reliant and thereby able to take their career into their own hands. Such employees display themselves as leaders not followers since the beginning of their careers as they make their decisions based on

their personal values that is a core characteristic of protean careers. Flexibility also helps employees to adapt to the changing circumstances in the twenty-first century (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Tett, Guterman, Bleier & Murphy, 2000). In these changing environments, PCA encourage flexibility and development of knowledge by taking the responsibility of one's own career. Employees who display such attitudes are more likely to see the connections between their work and private lives (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), appreciate freedom and believe in continuous learning process (Hall, 2002). The literature reviewed above induces us to expect positive relationships between employees' career anchors and protean career attitudes.

### **Career Anchors and Psychological Empowerment**

An employee's career anchor can be regarded as an intrinsic motivation such that when an employee works away from the areas related to his or her competencies, values, motives and needs, feelings of intrinsic motivation will decrease as well (Schein, 2006; Schein & Van Maanen, 2013). Career anchors involve employees' self-perceived abilities, motives and attitudes, thus the theory of anchors concentrate on internal career (Schein, 1990; Suutari & Taka, 2004). As employees proceed through their careers, they gradually progress career self-concepts/career anchors that reflect the interaction between employee and organization (Wils et al., 2010). These internal career perceptions may have important effects on PE perceptions. Schein's (1990) theory of career anchors suggests that career motivation is driven by an employee's personal understanding of abilities, needs and values.

PE is identified as a motivational construct manifested in four cognitions named as meaning, self-determination, competence and impact. Meaning is an individual's value of the task goal or purpose acting as a mechanism through which the individual become energized about work. Self-determination or autonomy is an individual's freedom in the initiation and continuation of work behaviors. Competence is the degree of self-efficacy or a sense of confidence about one's ability. Finally, impact signifies a belief that an individual's actions are influencing the system (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Rather than being the antecedents or consequences of one another, all of these four constructs concomitantly characterize the overall PE (Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 1997).

As PE is "an intrinsic task motivation manifested in cognitions that reflect an individuals' active orientation to his or her work role" (Spreitzer, 1995: 1443), it would be plausible to expect correlations between employees' career anchors and their empowerment states. The positive influence for the fit of an employee's career anchors and work environment on the career related outcomes such as job satisfaction have been emphasized in many studies (Baruch, 2004; Feldman & Bolino, 1996; Schein, 1990). It has been suggested that when career anchors are engaged with employees' work roles and employees work in accordance with their beliefs and values, they experience feelings of empowerment (Carless, 2004). Nevertheless, there has been limited empirical research on the relationships between career anchors and empowerment states.

### **Psychological Empowerment and Career Attitudes**

Self-management is essential for guiding employees to manage and make sense of their careers. In this context, incorporating intrinsic motivation into career development in today's

world will help to understand the psychological factors influencing career attitudes such as protean careers with a focus of “self” rather than the organization (Quigley & Tymon, 2006). Protean career orientation may positively influence career satisfaction as it is related with proactive disposition and intrinsic motivation (Briscoe et al., 2006). However, far too little attention has been concerned for examining the correlation of PE that is an intrinsic motivation and PCA (Park & Rothwell, 2009).

Intrinsic motivation is the key psychological component of employee empowerment and it enables individuals to become self-leading and self-managing. Protean career attitude includes high level of self-knowledge and personal responsibility with respect to a self-directed personal development (Hall & Moss, 1998). Personal identification with meaningful work is an important characteristic of protean careers. Employees with a more protean career orientation are less satisfied from promotions and salary and are more motivated by having autonomy and impact in the workplace (Hall, 2002). Positive psychological experiences contribute to the self-directed motivating mechanisms, which in turn affect individuals’ career attitudes (Peterson, Walumbwa, Byron & Myrowitz, 2009).

### **The mediating role of Psychological Empowerment**

The career can be anchored over time in the set of needs or motives that an employee continuously attempts to fulfill through work and the rewards obtained from work (Schein, 1975). It has been suggested that knowledge of one’s own career values, career goals, and intrinsic motivation may serve as important antecedents of career self-management (Quigley & Tymon, 2006). Nevertheless, numerous studies have suggested the influence of PE on employees’ career attitudes (Kraimer, Seibert & Liden, 1999; Rasdi, Garavan & Ismail, 2012). The aforementioned literature studies support the mediation conditions applied to this study: (a) links between employees’ career anchors and their career attitudes; (b) career anchors are related to PE; and (c) employees’ psychological perceptions are related to their PCA. Thus, it is plausible to expect that Millennials’ PE perceptions mediate the relationship between relevant career anchors and their protean career orientation as such:

*Hypothesis 1:* Millennials’ psychological empowerment mediates the positive relationship between their technical/functional competence and PCA.

*Hypothesis 2:* Millennials’ psychological empowerment mediates the positive relationship between their general managerial competence and PCA.

*Hypothesis 3:* Millennials’ psychological empowerment mediates the positive relationship between their autonomy/independence and PCA.

*Hypothesis 4:* Millennials’ psychological empowerment mediates the positive relationship between their security/stability and PCA.

*Hypothesis 5:* Millennials’ psychological empowerment mediates the positive relationship between their entrepreneurial creativity and PCA.

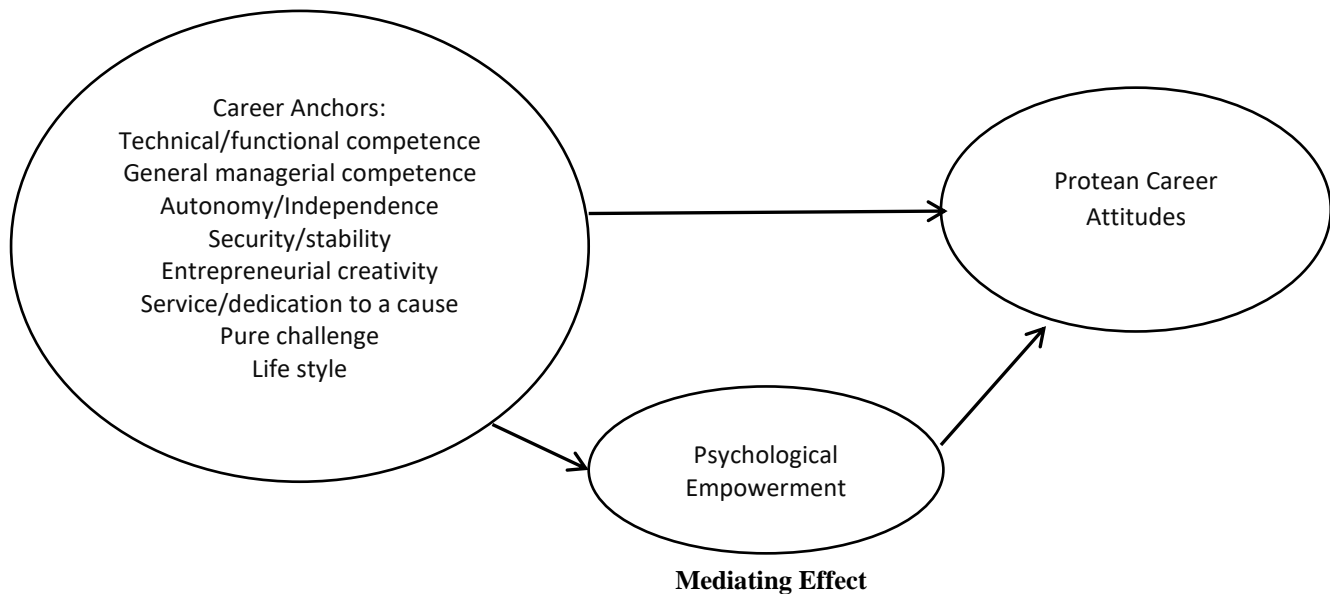
*Hypothesis 6:* Millennials’ psychological empowerment mediates the positive relationship between their service/dedication to a cause and PCA.

*Hypothesis 7:* Millennials’ psychological empowerment mediates the positive relationship between their pure challenge and PCA.



*Hypothesis 8:* Millennials' psychological empowerment mediates the positive relationship between their lifestyle and PCA.

The conceptual/theoretical framework of the mediating relationships between Millennials' career anchors, PE and career attitudes are summarized in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Theoretical model for predicting Millennials' career anchors and protean career attitudes

## Method

### Participants

Questionnaires assessing career anchors, PE perceptions and protean career orientation were distributed to employees from the Millennials generation working in 27 different Information Technology (IT) companies located in Ankara and İstanbul, in Turkey. IT companies were selected particularly for this present study as they experience rapid technological changes that are very important for Millennials and such companies develop continuous learning opportunities that are essential for protean careers (Gulyani & Bhatnagar, 2017). All of the participants' job tenures were between one and five years for the aim of having similar characteristics. The self-reported questionnaires were administered by the researcher in an on-site meeting room during regular scheduled working hours. Researcher explained the aim of the study to the participants and the participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality. No incentives were offered to the participants. The sample consists of 281 men (57%) and 211 women (43%).

### Measures

A survey based research design has been instrumented for data collection. The self-reported surveys for the study included measures of career anchors, psychological

empowerment and career attitudes. The responses to all of the following multi-item scales were averaged to form composite variables.

*Career Anchor Scale.* The career orientations inventory (COI) developed by Schein (2006) was used to measure the participants' career anchors. The COI is a self-report measure that contains forty items. Respondents rated each item on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = "never true for me", to 6 = "always true for me" according to their career orientations. Sample items include the following: "I am most fulfilled in my work when I have been able to use my special skills and talents" for technical/functional competence; "becoming a general manager is more attractive to me than becoming a senior functional manager in my current area of expertise" for general managerial competence; "I will feel successful in my career only if I achieve complete autonomy and freedom" for autonomy/independence; "I seek jobs in organizations that will give me a sense of security and stability" for security/stability; "I am always on the lookout for ideas that would permit me to start my own enterprise" for entrepreneurial creativity; "I dream of having a career that makes a real contribution to humanity and society" for service/dedication; "I will feel successful in my career only if I face and overcome very difficult challenges" for pure challenge, and "I dream of a career that will permit me to integrate my personal, family, and work needs" for lifestyle. The items in the scale were translated into Turkish using the back-translation technique to ensure their conceptual equivalence. One translator translated the original English version of the questionnaire into Turkish. Then another translator who didn't have any sight of the original version translated the Turkish version back into English. Afterwards, new and original English versions of the questionnaire were compared. No essential difference was found between them. Therefore, Turkish version of the questionnaire was considered to be a valid and equivalent translation.

The acceptable level of Cronbach's alpha for the internal reliability was suggested as above 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Hence, for the purposes of the present study, with the exception of the technical/functional competence and lifestyle career orientations, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for other career anchor subscales were regarded as satisfactory ranging from 0.70 to 0.74. Because of the relatively low internal consistency reliability of technical/functional ( $\alpha = 0.55$ ) and lifestyle ( $\alpha = 0.58$ ) subscales, these career anchors were omitted from the statistical analyses.

*Psychological Empowerment Scale.* Participants' PE perceptions were assessed using Spreitzer's (1995) Psychological Empowerment scale. For each of the four PE components (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact), the scale contains three items, for a total of twelve items. Sample items are as follows: "My job activities should be personally meaningful to me" and "My impact on what happens in my department should be large". Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale format ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree", to 5 = "strongly agree" based on their PE perceptions. As PE dimensions combine to provide a total empowerment score (Spreitzer, 1995), an overall measure of PE was used in all of the analyses. The Turkish translation and adaptation of the instrument was conducted by Ergeneli, Ari and Metin (2007). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.89.

*Protean Career Attitudes.* PCA of the participants were measured by the scale developed by Briscoe, Hall and DeMuth (2006). Career attitudes were assessed along a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = “strongly to little extent”, to 5 = “strongly agree” with higher scores indicating higher levels of the construct. The scale contains fourteen items such as “Freedom to choose my own career path is one of my most important values” and “What I think about what is right in my career is more important to me than what my company thinks”. As the strongest manifestation of protean careers is the combination in which a person is high in both values-driven and self-directed career attitudes (Briscoe & Hall, 2006), an overall measure of this scale was used (Cao, Hirschi & Deller, 2013; Gulyani, & Bhatnagar, 2017) in the analyses in the present study. The overall protean attitude score was calculated by computing the mean of these two sub dimensions. The Turkish adaptation and the validity of the Turkish version of the instrument have been established by Cakmak-Otluoglu (2012). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.81.

### Control Variables

For the present study, only gender was included as a control variable in the analyses. Age was not taken as a control variable as all of the participants are from the Millennials generation. Gender was dummy-coded as male = 0, female = 1.

## Results

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to assess the factor structures of the scales that were used in the study and to determine how well the measurement model fit the data (Bollen, 1989). Outliers and univariate distributions were scanned for skewness and kurtosis scores in order to test the normality assumptions. These were found within reasonable ranges such that; Skewness < 2 and Kurtosis values < 2. Multivariate normality with Mardia’s coefficient of the value for kurtosis was examined and there was no violation. Byrne’s (2010) recommendations were used for the assessment of the indexes in the present study.

CFA results demonstrated that the model did not initially provided a good fit with the data for the Career Anchors scale [ $\chi^2$  ( $df = 32$ ) = 59, GFI = 0.65, CFI = 0.72, TLI = 0.67 and RMSEA = 0.12]<sup>1</sup>. Based on the modification indices, a path of covariance was added between error terms of item 2 and 26 loading on “General Managerial Competence” scores. Additionally, another path of covariance was added between error terms of item 12 and 18 loading on “Security/Stability” scores. Consequently, the final model showed a better fit to the data [ $\chi^2$  ( $df = 69$ ) = 165, GFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.98 and RMSEA = 0.04]. For each career anchor construct, indexes were created by averaging the relevant items.

For the PE scale, the twelve items were averaged to create a single index and CFA results showed that the model provided a good fit for PE scale [ $\chi^2$  ( $df = 52$ ) = 114, GFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.92 and RMSEA = 0.06]. All estimated loadings were significant.

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<sup>1</sup> The criteria for a good fit (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2006):  $\chi^2/df$  ratio < 3, GFI = Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI > 0.90), TLI = Tucker Lewis Index (TLI > 0.90), RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA < 0.08), CFI = Comparative Fit Index (CFI > 0.90).

Finally, the fourteen items were averaged to create a single index for the measurement of Millennials' PCA. CFA results revealed that the model provided a good fit for the PCA scale [ $\chi^2$  (df = 134) = 296, GFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94 and RMSEA = 0.05]. All estimated loadings were significant.

### Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, alpha coefficients and inter-correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 1. As it can be seen from the table, the Cronbach's alpha scale reliability values for the scales and subscales, consisted of a range from 0.70 to 0.89 that were beyond the minimum acceptable level of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics, alpha coefficients and correlations among variables

Variable	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	-	-	-								
2. GM Comp.	3.44	.62	.06	(.72)							
3. Autonomy	3.77	.59	.01	.39**	(.73)						
4. Security	3.61	.67	-.11*	.31**	.19**	(.71)					
5. Ent. Cre.	3.56	.85	.19**	.25**	.38**	.12*	(.74)				
6. Service	3.74	.75	-.09	.21**	.31**	.17**	.25**	(.70)			
7. Challenge	3.68	.68	-.03	.27**	.35**	.18**	.28**	.16**	(.72)		
8. PE	4.09	.53	-.02	.25**	.36**	.29**	.29**	.26**	.40**	(.89)	
9. PCA	3.85	.53	.02	.08	.30**	.21**	.25**	.23**	.34**	.41**	(.81)

Note: Gender is coded as 0 = woman, 1 = man.

N = 492, \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Cronbach's alpha coefficients are in parentheses in the diagonal.

GM Comp. = General managerial competence, Ent. Cre = Entrepreneurial creativity, PE = Psychological Empowerment, PCA = Protean Career Attitudes.

### Hypothesis Testing

#### Mediated Regression Analysis

Mediated regression procedures were used in order to test the hypothesized models. According to Baron and Kenny (1986) four criteria need to be met to support the mediational hypothesis. First, the independent variables (career anchors: general managerial competence, security, autonomy, entrepreneurial creativity, service and pure challenge) should significantly be related to the mediator (PE). Second, the mediator (PE) needs to be significantly related to the dependent variable (PCA). Third, the independent variables (career anchors) should significantly be related to the dependent variable (PCA). Finally, full mediation will occur, if the relationship between career anchors and PCA disappears when PE is introduced into the regression equation predicting Millennials' PCA. If the coefficient between career anchors and

PCA after introducing PE into the regression equation remains significant but is reduced, there is evidence for partial mediation. Table 2 shows the results of the mediated regression analyses.

**Table 2.** Results of the mediated regression analyses

Equation	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	b	S.E.	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F
1a	General Managerial	PE	.20	.04	.25**	.06	23.69**
1b	PE	PCA	.38	.05	.42**	.17	72.54**
1c	General Managerial	PCA	.06	.04	.08 <sup>n.s.</sup>	.01	2.27 <sup>n.s.</sup>
1d	PE		.43	.05	.42**	-	-
	General Managerial	PCA	-.02	.04	-.03	.17	36.32**
2a	Autonomy	PE	.32	.04	.36**	.13	52.60**
2b	PE	PCA	.38	.05	.42**	.17	72.54**
2c	Autonomy	PCA	.28	.04	.31**	.09	36.87**
2d	PE		.34	.05	.36**	-	-
	Autonomy	PCA	.16	.04	.18**	.19	43.83**
3a	Security/stability	PE	.24	.04	.29**	.08	31.53**
3b	PE	PCA	.38	.05	.42**	.17	72.54**
3c	Security/stability	PCA	.18	.04	.21**	.05	16.67**
3d	PE		.36	.05	.38**	-	-
	Security/stability	PCA	.08	.04	.10**	.18	38.65**
4a	Entrepreneurial creativity	PE	.18	.03	.29**	.09	33.77**
4b	PE	PCA	.38	.05	.42**	.17	72.54**
4c	Entrepreneurial creativity	PCA	.16	.03	.25**	.06	24.47**
4d	PE		.38	.05	.37**	-	-
	Entrepreneurial creativity	PCA	.09	.03	.14**	.19	41.20**
5a	Service	PE	.18	.04	.26**	.07	26.79**
5b	PE	PCA	.38	.05	.42**	.17	72.54**
5c	Service	PCA	.17	.04	.23**	.05	21.16**
5d	PE		.38	.05	.37**	-	-
	Service	PCA	.09	.03	.12**	.18	40.77**
6a	Pure challenge	PE	.31	.04	.40**	.16	68.49**
6b	PE	PCA	.38	.05	.42**	.17	72.54**
6c	Pure challenge	PCA	.27	.03	.34**	.12	46.49**
6d	PE		.30	.05	.32**	-	-
	Pure challenge	PCA	.16	.04	.20**	.21	45.90**

Control variable = Gender, n.s. = non-significant \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

PE = Psychological Empowerment, PCA = Protean Career Attitudes

As stated before, technical/functional was not included into the analyses because of its low internal consistency reliability ( $\alpha = 0.55$ ) that was below the acceptable level. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was rejected.

As shown in the equations from 1a to 1d in Table 2, all of the three mediation conditions were not confirmed. First, in the equation 1a, general managerial competence was positively related to PE perceptions ( $\beta = 0.25$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Second, in the equation 1b, PE were positively related to PCA ( $\beta = 0.42$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). However, Equation 1c demonstrated that general managerial competence was not significantly related to PCA ( $\beta = 0.08$ ;  $p > 0.01$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was rejected.

Equation 2a showed that autonomy/independence was positively related to PE ( $\beta = 0.36$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), while the equation 2b displayed the positive relationship between PE and PCA ( $\beta = 0.42$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). In equations 2c and 2d, autonomy/independence was positively related to PCA, but this relationship was weakened (decreased from 0.31 to 0.18) when PE perceptions were added into the regression model. Sobel test (1982) was used to test whether the indirect effect of autonomy/independence on PCA via PE (mediator) was significantly different from zero using the relevant parameter estimates and standard errors (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Sobel test was significant ( $z = 3.75$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) indicating that Millennials' PE perceptions partially mediated the relation between their autonomy/independence and PCA. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

As shown in the equation 3a, security/stability was positively related to PE ( $\beta = 0.29$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). From the equations 3b to 3d, it can be understood that both security/stability and PE were related to PCA, but the relationship between security/stability and career attitudes was weakened (from 0.21 to 0.10) when PE was included into the model. Sobel Test was significant ( $z = 4.87$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that Millennials' PE perceptions partially mediated the relationship between their security/stability and PCA. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was confirmed.

Equations from 4a to 4d displayed that the three mediation conditions were confirmed. In equation 4a, entrepreneurial creativity was positively related to PE perceptions ( $\beta = 0.29$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). From the equations 4b to 4d, it can be understood that both entrepreneurial creativity and PE were related to PCA, but the relationship between entrepreneurial creativity and protean career orientation was weakened (from 0.25 to 0.14) when PE was included into the model. Sobel test was significant ( $z = 5.52$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) indicating that Millennials' PE perceptions partially mediated the relation between their entrepreneurial creativity and PCA. Thereby, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

Similarly, for the equations 5a to 5d in Table 2, service/dedication was positively related to PE ( $\beta = 0.26$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Besides, both service/dedication and PE were related to PCA, but the relative weight of service/dedication on PCA was weakened (from 0.23 to 0.12) when PE was added into the model. Sobel test was significant ( $z = 4.25$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) showing that PE partially mediated the relation between service/dedication and PCA. Hence, Hypothesis 6 was confirmed.

Finally, equation 6a showed the positive relationship between pure challenge and PE ( $\beta = 0.40$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). From the equations 6b to 6d, it can be realized that both pure challenge and PE were related to PCA, but the relationship between pure challenge and protean career orientation was weakened (from 0.34 to 0.20) when PE was included into the model. Sobel Test

was significant ( $z = 5.12, p < 0.01$ ) revealing that Millennials' PE perceptions partially mediated the relation between their pure challenge and PCA, and thus supporting Hypothesis 7.

As stated previously, lifestyle was not included into the analyses because of its low internal consistency reliability ( $\alpha = 0.58$ ) that was below the acceptable level. Therefore, Hypothesis 8 was rejected.

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to advance the understanding of Millennials employees' career development process. In this respect, the underlying mechanism structured between Millennials' career anchors and PCA was examined. The present study endeavored to explore the mediating role of Millennials' PE perceptions on their career anchors-career attitudes relationship. The results generally supported the proposed hypotheses.

The first theoretical contribution of the study is the empirical examination of the influence of Millennials' career orientations on their career attitudes. Findings reveal that Millennials' career anchors directly influence their PCA. This finding is consistent with Schein's (1990) theory of career anchors, Briscoe and Hall's (2006) theory of protean careers and London's (1983) self-determination theory. Career anchors help employees to perceive their own perspectives on their talents and abilities. Findings of this study demonstrate that Millennials' career anchors play an essential role in their protean career orientation. Schein's (1978) career orientations theory can be regarded as a concept of values-driven orientation (Rodrigues, Guest, & Budjanovcanin, 2013) that is a basic notion of protean careers (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Career anchors, autonomy and service, in particular, are close to Briscoe and Hall's (2006) notion of the self and value directed dimensions (Gubler et al., 2014). London's (1983) theory of self-determination emphasizes that employees' attitudes are directed through their own career values and Schein (2006) posits that the self-image of values is an employee's "career anchor". Results of the study indicate that Millennials' career anchors of autonomy, security/stability, entrepreneurial creativity, service/dedication to a cause and pure challenge have significant positive relationships with their protean career orientation. Millennials are socially conscious giving importance to social and environmental issues (Ng & Gossett, 2013). This study found that Millennials who are high in "service/dedication to a cause" have a tendency to display PCA. Career dynamics of knowledge workers cause a shift nature of employment towards a greater degree of self-determination leading PCA (Baruch, 2004). Autonomy is an important priority for Millennials as observed from workplace interviews with hundreds of Millennials employees such that Millennials, in general, demand the freedom and flexibility to get the job done in their own way (Martin, 2005) conducting positive correlations with their PCA. Millennials are excited by the opportunities for creating something and give importance to entrepreneurial creativity. They are reported as more confident and entrepreneurial compared with previous generations and this new generation at work is called one of "born entrepreneurs" (Prabhu, McGuire, Kwong, Zhang & Ilyinsky, 2017). It has been reported that employees concurrently high in entrepreneurial creativity have highest self-directed attitudes (Chan et al., 2012). Millennials still highly value for employment security for a job in spite of their low expectations for security as they realize that lifelong employment is rare in today's workplace (Dries, Pepermans, & De Kerpel, 2008). Thus,

they are likely to take a more proactive approach towards their career self-management (Lyons et al., 2012) that cause them to engage in managing their own careers in the context of PCA. Millennials have a tendency to set themselves challenging goals that they become motivated to overcome tough problems. In line with “career learning cycle” (Hall, 2002), this study found that Millennials high in pure challenge have also PCA.

The second theoretical contribution of the present study is the development and empirical examination of a framework explaining how Millennials’ career anchors positively influence their career attitudes. The study found that positive relationships between Millennials’ career anchors and their protean careers were mediated by their PE perceptions. This finding enriches the understanding of the current profile of Millennials: those with a protean career attitude are self-centered, achievement oriented, ambitious and independent (Gulyani & Bhatnagar, 2017). As motivational factors become progressively imperative in the workplace (Howard, 1995), employees own understanding and management of their personal motivation through a career self-management process emerges as an important topic for exploration. In line with the suggestions of previous studies that emphasize the parallelism of PE with protean careers (Quigley & Tymon 2006), it is found that Millennials’ PE perceptions partially mediate the relationship between their career anchors (autonomy, security/stability, entrepreneurial creativity, service/dedication to a cause and pure challenge) and protean career orientations.

The last contribution of the study is the contribution to the generational cohort by proposing a model to theorize Millennials’ career development process. The findings reveal that Millennials possessing particular career orientations are more likely to have higher PE and display higher protean career orientation regarding their career management.

### **Practical Implications**

The research has implications for organizations, managers and Human Resource (HR) practitioners in organizations. From the results of the study, managers and HR practitioners should have a comprehensive understanding for the influential factors for Millennials’ PCA. HR practitioners should consider the importance of Millennials’ career anchors and their PE perceptions to enhance employees’ self-directed career management. The significant direct relationships between Millennials’ career anchors and PCA present an important implication for HR practitioners. Based on the findings, Millennials’ specific career anchors, such as autonomy and entrepreneurial activity, are one of the predictors in fostering Millennials’ self-directed career management. Therefore, HR practitioners need to consider their responsibility for understanding Millennials career anchors to enhance their career development. A greater understanding of Millennials’ career anchors may help organizations to tailor their career initiatives more successfully. This study indicates that cumulative career anchor information can be a good indicator for the key drives of career self-management and create an understanding of the overriding career culture. Organizations should consider Millennials’ need for security, autonomy, entrepreneurial creativity, dedication to a cause and pure challenge, and their relationships with self-directed management. HR practitioners should be clear about future career prospects by supporting Millennials in engaging in realistic career planning and further education and training opportunities in their career development process. Furthermore,



managers should provide more independence and flexibility for Millennials at workplace because of their preferences. Moreover, findings suggest that Millennials' values and motives underlying their career anchors act as the psychological forces that give impetus to their PE, leading to higher levels of PCA. In this manner, Millennials should be encouraged to take the responsibility of their own careers (Wiese, Freund & Baltes, 2002).

Finally, organizations should develop career management systems about career paths. Managers should regulate various types of job design and organizational support programs and examine how these development opportunities influence employees' career scenarios. HR practitioners should try to understand how employees view career development from the perspective of protean career. Motivational factors are crucial in the workplace, despite the fact that most managers are unsure how to manage them (Howard, 1995). The role of managers should be considered as facilitating factors in career adjustment. In this manner, managers should try to understand their employees' feelings of PE and develop supervisory training programs and reward systems.

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