



Protean Career Orientation and Organizational Commitment: The Role of Organizational Identification

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigates the effect of individuals' protean career orientations on their organizational commitment. We expected protean attitudes to be positively related to organizational commitment, based on the perspective that protean career orientation could increase the sense of organizational identification.

Design/methodology/approach: We targeted permanent employees from various industries. The survey was conducted through a website, and a total of 572 employees participated in the survey. For analysis, structural equation modeling was used.

Findings: The results show that protean career orientation is positively related to organizational commitment, and this relationship is fully mediated by organizational identification. Specifically, affective and normative commitment were positively influenced by protean career orientation, being mediated by organizational identification. Only continuance commitment did not show any relationship with the protean attitude.

Research limitations/implications: Despite elucidating the process of mediating, this study limited the variable to organizational identification. The results of this study suggest that more diverse variables (e. g., personality, ideology, values) and approaches (e. g., moderated mediation model) could be investigated in the area of protean career orientation.

Originality/value: The results are contrary to previous speculations that protean people are self-centered with insufficient commitment toward the organization. In particular, the positive relationship between protean career orientation and organizational identification is newly suggested, providing a possibility for redefining the core values of protean careers and their potential.

Keywords: Protean career orientation, Organizational commitment, Organizational identification

I. Introduction

In modern working environments, career orientations rapidly evolve and exhibit generational diversity. Younger generations favor protean careers over

traditional paths (Dries et al., 2008; Hess and Jepsen, 2009). They prefer changing jobs frequently instead of devoting themselves to one organization (Meier et al., 2010). They are less associated with the company and more engaged in the work type. They readily switch to a company with better opportunities (Birdie and Madhavkumar, 2017).

Owing to these characteristics, several researchers view the protean career orientation negatively in terms of commitment. Changing organizations easily to

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pursue personal values and growth is considered a self-centered tendency, which makes employees less committed to an organization (Briscoe and Finkelstein, 2009; Briscoe et al., 2006). Some researchers have expected protean career orientation to be negatively related to organizational commitment. Briscoe and Finkelstein (2009) assume that the independent nature of protean attitudes negatively affects all three types of commitment (affective, continuance, and normative). However, empirical results regarding this speculation remain inconclusive. Results on protean career orientation's link to organizational commitment vary, and research investigating the underlying reasons is scant.

These speculations are based on the "conceptualization" of protean career orientation. Since Hall (1976) first mentioned the protean career as a process in which a person independently manages careers focusing on self-fulfillment and personal need, two metacompetencies comprising the concept of protean career orientation have emerged: *value-driven* and *self-directed* (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Hall, 2004). Value-driven refers to focusing on one's internal needs, motivation, and interests, and self-directed means being independent and able to adapt to environmental changes by one's own will and responsibility (Hall & Chandler, 2005; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007). These two main competencies support the viewpoint that protean oriented individuals are more self-centered and individualized, focusing more on their own interests and needs than groups' or organizations' goals. However, this approach has been criticized as excessively narrowly conceptualizing protean career orientation (Gubler, Arnold, & Coombs, 2014). Arnold and Cohen (2008) insisted that "value-driven" should be observed from a different viewpoint such that it means putting a value on loyalty, conformity, and service rather than personal needs and self-expressions.

Additionally, in the measurement area, Gubler, Arnold, and Coombs (2014) suggested that measurement items for protean career items could be much broadened rather than focusing on value-driven and self-directed. O'Sullivan (2002) proposed that protean career

orientation includes the tendencies of networking and information seeking. Granrose and Baccili (2006) also applied new aspects such as needs for work and life balance as the major criteria for measuring protean career orientation, and McDonald, Brown, and Bradley (2005) emphasized new tendencies such as learning attitude as the main criteria. Bridgstock (2007) added new dimensions such as proactivity and a positive interpersonal orientation as the main criteria for protean career orientation, and these could not be reconciled with traditional definitions.

Considering these points, this study aims to elucidate the relationship between protean orientation and commitment from the perspective of "organizational identification." We expect that individuals' protean orientation will increase organizational identification, positively impacting organizational commitment. This approach is meaningful because it could positively provide new insight into the value and function of protean career orientation. Contrary to previous speculations stating that protean people lack sufficient loyalty toward the organization and only pursue personal interests, this study suggests that the protean tendency could increase ownership and loyalty towards the organization. This tendency could be a valuable individual characteristic worthy of the organization's close attention. Furthermore, this study attempts to reveal the cause of the relationship between protean orientation and commitment. By investigating a new mediation variable, this study contributes to understanding the process of the influences and their contexts more specifically. In that sense, our empirical results theoretically provide a novel perspective on the nature of protean career orientation and propose its new potential as a personal tendency leading to positive organizational behaviors.

II. Theoretical Background

Protean career orientation refers to an individual's tendency to take charge of their career development,

place value on freedom and growth, and maintain subjective criteria for career success (Hall, 2004). This is contrary to a traditional career in terms of evaluating career success by psychological success rather than position level or salary. Additionally, a protean career orientation presents a high degree of mobility based on attitudes toward professional work commitment (Hall, 1976). Hall (2004) emphasizes that protean careers require individuals to equip themselves with two meta-competencies—namely, adaptability and self-awareness. A person who has these meta-competencies can show a proactive attitude toward career development and smart performance on the job. A deficiency in one of these can be problematic (Hall, 2004). Protean career orientation means the tendency to acquire new knowledge and skills and being ready for the changing environment, focusing on the values of freedom and autonomy (Zhang, Wang, Zhang, Xu, & Xu, 2023).

Empirical research has focused on the relationship between protean career orientation and organizational commitment. Organizational commitment refers to the extent to which an individual pursues the goals and values of the organization (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Organizational commitment is regarded as a multi-dimensional construct consisting of affective (emotional attachment-based), normative (obligation-based), and continuance (cost-induced) (Allen & Meyer, 1990). It has been found to anticipate improved performances and knowledge-sharing behaviors (Koo, Kim, & Kim, 2017). Regarding its relationship with protean career orientation, a common perception is that one's protean attitude is negatively related to organizational commitment. It is because such people tend to value freedom, growth, and future career development and proactively search for such opportunities. If an organization does not fulfill these needs, individuals with a protean attitude are expected to easily leave or withdraw their commitment (Briscoe and Finkelstein, 2009; Briscoe et al., 2006). However, the empirical results in this regard have been inconclusive. Some studies have detected no relationship or no negative relationship between protean career and organizational commitment

(Briscoe and Finkelstein, 2009; Çakmak-Otluoğlu, 2012). However, other studies have found a positive relationship between protean careers and organizational commitment (Baruch et al., 2016; Grimland et al., 2012). Particularly, affective and normative commitment have been found to be related to protean careers (Çakmak-Otluoğlu, 2012; Fernandez and Enache, 2008).

This study expects a positive relationship between protean career orientation and organizational commitment—based on the perspective that the former is more likely to shape "organizational identity" for individuals. Organizational identification refers to "the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization" (Mael and Ashforth, 1992, p. 104). This refers to the extent to which organizational membership is incorporated into a person's self-definition (Pratt, 1998). Organizational identification is known to be related with psychological ownership (Lim, 2018). It has also been found to be related to positive employee outcomes, such as job performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and work efforts (Cho and Treadway, 2011; Finch et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2016). Organizational identification has a close conceptual linkage with organizational commitment in the sense that both constructs reflect an individual's attachment to the organization (Knippenberg and Sleebos, 2006). However, despite their conceptual similarity, both constructs differ: Organizational identification is a cognitive construct reflecting self-concept, whereas organizational commitment is an attitude toward the organization (Knippenberg and Sleebos, 2006; Pratt, 1998). Numerous studies have indicated that organizational identification can precipitate organizational commitment; for instance, individuals who perceive *oneness* and develop emotional bonds with the organization become more committed to it (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000; Meyer et al., 2004; Meyer et al., 2006). Empirical studies have proven this relationship (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000; Marique and Stinglhamber, 2011). A meta-analysis confirmed that organizational identification is significantly associated with affective organizational commitment

(Lee et al., 2015).

Assuming a positive relationship between these two variables, we expect that protean career orientation would be positively related to their organizational identification. This can be explained by the following three features of protean careers: *self-determination, attitudes toward work, and an organization-centered propensity*. First, as mentioned above, "identity (self-awareness)" is a meta-competency of a protean career orientation. Hall (2004) describes identity awareness as being able to decipher if the organization is a good fit with self-concept, self-image, and self-identity. Developing a clear image of the self, protean individuals proactively try managing and changing their career paths to fit their self-concepts (Hall, 2002). These propensities reflect an individual's need for "self-determination," which refers to the need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Rockmann and Ballinger, 2017). Having a sense of autonomy is critical for the awareness of self-identity. Moreover, relatedness is an important constituent for maintaining and developing self-concept. These characteristics of protean orientation are closely related to organizational identification. Rockmann and Ballinger (2017) empirically found that the fulfillment of relatedness and autonomy increases organizational identification. Another study found that individuals' internal locus of control is positively related to their organizational identification (Lee, 2013). Considering these findings, we can expect that individuals with a protean orientation are more likely to show organizational identification. Weisman, Wu, Yoshikawa, and Lee (2023) explained this relationship conceptually, stating that the more autonomy and self-determination employees believe they have, the more sense of "shared fate and cognitive overlap" they feel with the organization.

Further, identity awareness refers to "identity learning," which is "the ability to gather self-related feedback, to form accurate self-perceptions, and to change one's self-concept as appropriate" (Hall, 2002, p. 161). Once protean people choose an organization and decide to work there, they are ready to fit their own self-concept into the organization. This is

because—from the moment of choice—they usually select an organization that is well-suited, worth investing their time and energy in, and helpful in improving their self-image. Therefore, they are more likely to adapt their self-identity to the organization, fostering an organizational identity.

Another key feature of protean careers is a value-driven focus, pursuing career goals aligned with one's internal values (Briscoe et al., 2006). The core values of protean careers are freedom, growth, and satisfaction (Hall, 2004). Protean people tend to view their work as a means to express their core values and consider fulfilling them as a career success. This attitude makes individuals purposeful and passionate and helps them focus on their inherent meaning. These characteristics are related to organizational identification. Researchers have posited that individuals with a "calling" orientation toward work, such as pursuing meaningful work, being passionate, and trying to find professionalism, are more likely to exhibit organizational identification (Astakhova and Porter, 2015; Kong, 2016). Therefore, value-driven orientation in protean careers is closely related to organizational identification.

Third, researchers have suggested that protean career orientation is neither selfish nor self-centered (Granrose and Baccili, 2006; Gubler et al., 2014; Hall, 1996). According to empirical studies, individuals with a protean orientation tend to exhibit higher levels of learning performance, innovation, altruism, and cooperation (Gasteiger, 2007; Park, 2008). These results suggest that protean careers should not be viewed as involving opportunistic tendencies that easily betray the organization for the sake of individual careers. Rather, individuals with a protean career orientation are more likely to engage in efforts to provide benefits to other people and the organization. This might stem from their value-driven orientations and pursuit of professionalism (Hall, 2004). If their altruistic tendency is focused on the organization, it could be a form of organizational identification.

Based on that, individuals' protean career orientation is positively related to organizational identification, and consequently increases their

organizational commitment. This study suggests different viewpoints for the outcome of protean career orientation. We propose the mediating variable of organizational identification, which has not been considered in previous research. This mediating effect is explained by the common characteristics between protean career orientation and organizational identification: self-determination, attitudes toward work, and an organization-centered propensity. Contrary to previous speculations and insisting that protean career orientation would cause a lack of loyalty, commitment, and social identity, this study expects that protean people would be more identified with the organization and consequently have a higher level of commitment toward the organization. We present the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Protean career orientation is positively related to organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 2. Protean career orientation is positively related to organizational identification.

Hypothesis 3. Organizational identification is positively related to organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 4. The relationship between protean career orientation and organizational commitment is fully mediated by organizational identification.

Specifically, regarding the three sub-dimensions of organizational commitment, we expect that affective, normative, and continuance commitment would be positively related to protean career orientation. This expectation is based on the main characteristics of protean career orientation aforementioned, such as value-focused, calling approach to the job, altruism and cooperation, learning orientation, and pursuing organizational goals, which can be easily transformed into emotional attachment toward the organization, a sense of duty and responsibility, and the willingness to remain in the organization (Astakhova and Porter, 2015; Kong, 2016). Based on this, we developed the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 5. Protean career orientation is positively related to affective commitment.

Hypothesis 6. Organizational identification is positively related to affective commitment.

Hypothesis 7. The relationship between protean career orientation and affective commitment is fully mediated by organizational identification.

Hypothesis 8. Protean career orientation is positively related to normative commitment.

Hypothesis 9. Organizational identification is positively related to normative commitment.

Hypothesis 10. The relationship between protean career orientation and normative commitment is fully mediated by organizational identification.

Hypothesis 11. Protean career orientation is positively related to continuance commitment.

Hypothesis 12. Organizational identification is positively related to continuance commitment.

Hypothesis 13. The relationship between protean career orientation and continuance commitment is fully mediated by organizational identification.

III. Method

A. Sample

We administered a survey among permanent company employees from various industries in Korea. The survey was administered through a website; each participant was assured that their response data would remain anonymous and used only for academic purposes. In total, 588 employees participated in the survey. Among them, 16 were excluded because of incomplete and careless responses, and 572 datasets were finalized.

The descriptive statistics of the sample were as follows. Regarding gender distribution, 53% were men and 47% were women. Most participants were in their 20s (67%), while the remainder were in their 30s (29%) or 40s (4%). The tenures of participants were under 1 year (8%), 1-2 years (32%), 3-4 years (40%), 5-7 years (19%), and over 7 years (1%). Job positions were as follows: individual contributors (47%), managers (42%), and directors (11%). The

industries included the following: materials (29%), consumer goods (21%), communication services (15%), information technology (14%), financial (10%), energy (8%), and others (3%) (Table 1).

B. Measures

For protean career orientation, 15 items developed by Briscoe, Hall, and DeMuth (2006) were used. This measure comprised two dimensions—specifically, self-directed career management and value-driven predisposition. Sample items were as follows: "I am in charge of my own career" (self-directed) and "What is most important to me is how I feel about my career success, not how other people feel" (value-driven). Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The reliability coefficient was .76.

To measure organizational identification, six items from Mael and Ashforth (1992) were adopted. The items measured the extent to which individuals identified themselves with the organization (e.g., "This organization's successes are my successes"). Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The reliability coefficient was .83.

For organizational commitment, the 18-item scale developed by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) was used. This scale measured three types of organizational commitment—specifically, affective, continuance, and normative. Each type included six items (e.g.,

"I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own" [affective], "It would be very difficult for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to" [continuance], "This organization deserves my loyalty" [normative]). Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The reliability coefficients were .89 (affective), .81 (continuance), and .79 (normative). The correlations are presented in Table 2.

C. Analysis

Structural equation modeling was used to test the study hypotheses. The full mediating effects of organizational identification on overall organizational commitment and specific types (affective, continuance, and normative) were tested by Holmbeck's (1997) suggestions. In the testing process for the full mediation effect (A-B-C), three steps were taken: (1) The fitness of the direct effect model is appropriate, and the coefficient between A and C is significant. (2) The fitness of the full mediation model is appropriate, and both coefficients between A and B and between B and C are significant. (3) The improvement in the Chi-square from full mediation to partial mediation is not significant at the level of .05, and the coefficient between A and C in the mediation model is not significant.

In order to take these steps, three different structural models were analyzed—the direct effect model

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Gender	572	1.47	.49	1	2
Age	572	1.37	.56	1	3
Tenure	572	2.73	.89	1	5
Job position	572	1.64	.67	1	3
Industry	572	2.91	1.76	1	7
Protean career orientation	572	3.15	.84	1	5
Organizational identification	572	3.39	.67	1	5
Organizational commitment	572	3.42	.72	1	5

(protean career orientation influences organizational commitment), full mediation model (the coefficient of protean career orientation on commitment is constrained in the mediation model by organizational identification), and partial mediation model (the coefficient of protean career on commitment is not constrained in the mediation model by organizational identification) (Holmbeck, 1997). The following fitness indices were used to evaluate the models: chi-square, df, comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). During the analysis, gender, age, tenure, job position, and industry were controlled because of their potential to influence outcomes.

IV. Results

For the validity test of the measures, we performed confirmative factor analysis (CFA). We developed an independent model in which all variables are independent and compared the fitness of this model with that of comparative models. The results of the independent model showed appropriate fitness (CFI=.968, NFI=.943, TLI=.933, RMSEA=.044). Relatively, comparative models presented lower levels of fitness in those indexes (protean career and organizational identification are correlated: CFI=.779, NFI=.762,

TLI=.621, RMSEA=.116; organizational identification and organizational commitment are correlated: CFI=.817, NFI=.798, TLI=.685, RMSEA=.106; protean career and organizational commitment are correlated: CFI=.645, NFI=.634, TLI=.389, RMSEA=.148). Based on that, we concluded that the constructs have discriminant validity because they are independently represented in each measure.

Regarding of the hypotheses about overall organizational commitment (hypothesis 1-4), the results are presented in Table 3. The direct effect model presented appropriate levels of fitness, (fitness criteria: CFI >.90, NFI >.90, TLI>.90, RMSEA <.08; Bentler, 1990; Bentler and Bonett, 1980; Bollen, 1989; Hair et al., 2006). The path coefficient of the relationship between protean career orientation and organizational commitment was significant (step 1) (path coefficient=.125, S.E=.053, $p<.05$). The full mediation model showed appropriate levels of fitness, and both of the coefficients between protean career orientation and organizational identification and between organizational identification and organizational commitment were significant (step 2) (protean career-organizational identification: path coefficient=.377, S.E=.094, $p<.00$; organizational identification-organizational commitment: path coefficient=.638, S.E=.090, $p<.00$). The chi-square of the partial mediation model was improved from that of the full mediation model, but the difference was not significant ($\Delta\chi^2=1.381 < 3.84$, $\Delta df=1$). In this model, the coefficient between protean career and

Table 2. Correlations

	Gender	Age	Tenure	Job position	Industry	Protean career	OID	Org. com
Gender								
Age	-.245**							
Tenure	.008	.091*						
Job position	-.074	.023	-.062					
Industry	.080	-.205**	.047	.029				
Protean career	-.104*	.022	-.001	-.010	.071			
OID	-.138**	.070	-.092*	-.036	.058	.198**		
Org. com	-.084*	.063	.038	-.113**	.004	.117**	.377**	

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, OID: organizational identification, Org. com: organizational commitment

Table 3. The results of structural equation modeling

	Model	Chi-square	df	CFI	NFI	TLI	RMSEA
Organizational commitment	Direct effect model	72.923	31	.963	.938	.934	.049
	Full mediation model	58.127	31	.976	.951	.957	.039
	Partial mediation model	56.746	30	.976	.952	.956	.040
Affective commitment	Direct effect model	51.878	17	.964	.948	.923	.060
	Full mediation model	36.519	17	.980	.963	.957	.045
	Partial mediation model	35.400	16	.980	.965	.955	.046
Normative commitment	Direct effect model	60.507	12	.932	.919	.842	.084
	Full mediation model	41.939	12	.958	.944	.902	.066
	Partial mediation model	41.929	11	.957	.944	.890	.070
Continuance commitment	Direct effect model	28.763	12	.974	.959	.933	.053
	Full mediation model	21.698	12	.986	.969	.966	.038
	Partial mediation model	21.652	11	.984	.969	.960	.041

organizational commitment was not significant (path coefficient = $-.108$, $S.E. = .100$, $p = .281$). Furthermore, in the full mediation model, the direct effect of protean career orientation on organizational commitment was approximately zero and not significant, whereas the indirect effect of it through organizational identification was significant (direct effect: $.000$; indirect effect: $.240$) (step 3). Considering these results, we concluded that protean career orientation is related to organizational commitment, and this relationship is fully mediated by organizational identification. Hypothesis 1, 2, 3, and 4 were supported.

Regarding the mediating effect of organizational identification for each type of commitment, the results are as follows. First, the direct effect model showed appropriate levels of fitness in affective and normative commitment, with significant coefficients between protean career orientation and each type of commitment (affective: path coefficient = $.122$, $S.E. = .053$, $p < .05$; normative: path coefficient = $.303$, $S.E. = .119$, $p < .05$). For continuance commitment, however, the coefficient between protean career orientation and continuance commitment was not significant, even though the model showed an appropriate fitness (path coefficient = $.089$, $S.E. = .103$, $p = .385$). This implies that, for continuance commitment, the first condition to test the mediation effect was not fulfilled (Holmbeck, 1997). Second, full mediation models in affective and normative

commitment showed appropriate levels of fitness, and the coefficients between protean career orientation and organizational identification and between organizational identification and each type of commitment were significant (protean career-organizational identification: affective [path coefficient = $.377$, $S.E. = .090$, $p < .00$], normative [path coefficient = $.495$, $S.E. = .107$, $p < .00$], organizational identification-organizational commitment: affective [path coefficient = $.624$, $S.E. = .090$, $p < .00$] and normative [path coefficient = $.715$, $S.E. = .156$, $p < .00$]). Finally, for both affective and normative commitments, chi-squares were slightly improved by unconstrained conditions, but both were not statistically significant (affective: $\Delta\chi^2 = 1.119 < 3.84$, $\Delta df = 1$; normative: $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.01 < 3.84$, $\Delta df = 1$). And the coefficients between protean career and organizational commitment in the partial mediation model were not significant (affective: path coefficient = $-.082$, $S.E. = .081$, $p = .311$; normative: path coefficient = $-.018$, $S.E. = .188$, $p = .925$). In the full mediation models, direct effects of protean career orientation on these commitments were approximately zero and not significant, whereas indirect effects were significant (affective: direct effect ($.000$), indirect effect ($.236$); normative: direct effect ($.000$), indirect effect ($.354$)). The results show that protean career orientation was related to affective and normative commitments and that these two relationships were fully mediated by

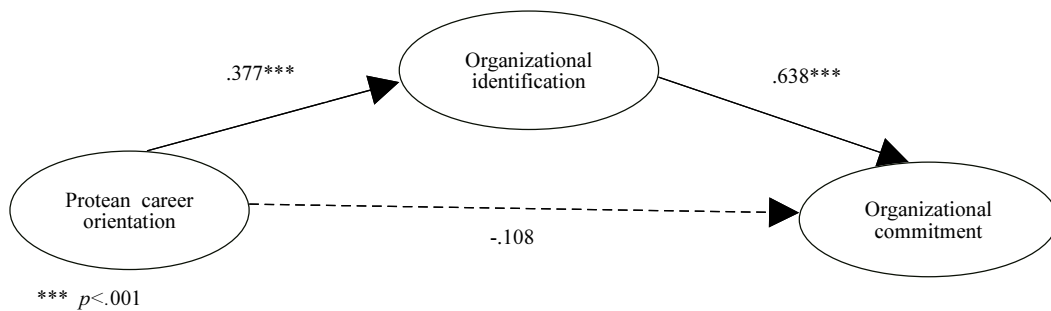


Figure 1. Pathway of the mediation process for organizational commitment

organizational identification. However, protean career orientation did not have a significant relationship with continuance commitment. Therefore, hypotheses 5-10 were supported; and, hypothesis 11, 12, 13 were not supported. (Figure 1).

V. Discussions

The results reveal that protean career orientation is positively related to organizational commitment. This relationship is fully mediated by organizational identification. Specifically, among the three types of commitment, affective and normative commitments were positively related to protean career orientation, which is mediated by organizational identification. However, unlike our expectations, continuance commitment did not show any relationship to commitment.

Our findings are novel in that they provide contradictory evidence to previous theoretical speculations. Previous studies have claimed that protean career orientations lower organizational commitment owing to individuals prioritizing personal needs and independent careers, thereby reducing loyalty and increasing turnover when their needs are unfulfilled (Briscoe and Finkelstein, 2009; Briscoe et al., 2006). However, this study empirically suggests that protean career orientation can be positively related to organizational commitment as well as

organizational identification. It proposes a new potential for the value of protean career orientation, such that it could reinforce positive attitudes and behaviors in employees. Although Domberger (2005) indicated that highly protean people are more likely to have a strong sense of social contribution, these points were rarely proved empirically. In that sense, this study provides new evidence for this viewpoint and contributes to understanding the positive function of protean career orientation as one of its personal attributes and characteristics.

Theoretically, this study provides theoretical implications for important aspects of protean career orientation. First, their career choices and behaviors are predominantly "value-driven" (Hall, 2004). From the moment they apply to organizations, they are likely to choose an organization whose values and norms suit their personal values. Therefore, upon entering an organization, they maintain a strong person-organization fit. Numerous empirical studies have shown that person-organization fit is a good antecedent of organizational identification (Anaza, 2015; Bouraoui et al., 2018; Cable and DeRue, 2002; Demir et al., 2015). When individuals perceive that the values of organizations are well aligned with theirs, they develop organizational membership (Cable and DeRue, 2002). This membership and social identity ultimately increase organizational commitment (Lee et al., 2015).

Second, "self-identity"—a meta-competency of protean careers—is the tendency to maintain and validate one's self-image (Hall, 2004). Organizations

serve as a vital means for self-identity fulfillment, whereby individuals strengthen their identity by aligning with ideal values and images. Thus, an organization can be a good social group wherein self-categorization can be realized (George and Chattopadhyay, 2005). Therefore, they identify with the organization, demonstrating commitment.

Third, protean people may have a strong "need" for organizational identification. Feeling a sense of accomplishment in their work life is an important element in achieving psychological career success and work satisfaction (Hall, 2004). They could desire a leadership position to lead the organization to success or devote themselves to the significant improvement of a certain industry or community. In this process, maintaining a sense of organizational membership and identification becomes a prerequisite.

Additionally, we propose that protean careers have different relationships with each type of commitment. Unlike previous analyses, we found that normative and affective commitments can be influenced by protean careers and mediated by organizational identification. This positive relationship between protean career and affective commitment aligns with previous studies (Çakmak-Otluoğlu, 2012; Fernandez and Enache, 2008). This may be because of the value-driven tendencies of protean careers. Protean individuals tend to choose an organization based on its fitness for value, chance for growth, and potential for work satisfaction rather than position or salary (Hall, 2014). Therefore, individuals are more likely to have an affection for the organization chosen based on these criteria.

Our results reveal a positive relationship between protean careers and normative commitment. Studies have posited that value-driven career management negatively influences individuals' normative commitment, assuming the characteristic of protean orientation as self-centered (Çakmak-Otluoğlu, 2012; Sargent and Domberger, 2007). However, this study's results support the notion that protean orientation does not refer to selfish or self-centered orientations. According to the literature, protean career orientation significantly pertains to altruism, cooperation, and

openness to change (Gasteiger, 2007). Furthermore, they have a strong sense of "professionalism" in their work (Hall, 2004). They tend to devote themselves to their work with a sense of fellowship and continuous learning. These ways of thinking can manifest as a form of normative commitment to an organization. In our study, continuous commitment was not related to a protean career. Considering the results of previous studies regarding the negative relationship between them, our results mitigate the negative conception of protean career orientation.

This study's results have several practical implications. First, organizations need to adopt a new perspective on individuals with a protean career orientation. Our results did not find any negative influence of the protean career on the three types of commitment. Rather, protean careers positively impacted commitment and organizational identification. Specifically, when we consider that affective commitment is most strongly related to job performance and organizational citizenship behavior, protean careers can yield various positive outcomes (Mercurio, 2015). Therefore, organizations should consider this tendency as a positive personal characteristic beyond the previous negative view. In recruitment and selection processes, protean career orientation should be considered a criterion for anticipating positive attitudes and behaviors in the future. For jobs demanding strong organizational identification and commitment, assessing this tendency in multiple ways during the selection process is crucial.

Second, preparing human resource systems that can help individuals fulfill their career goals within the organization would be beneficial for organizations. If individuals can try diverse career paths and experiences supported by organizational systems, it would be an effective way to recruit talented people and retain them. Providing employees with opportunities to experience diverse jobs or tasks across boundaries would be an attractive factor for protean people. Maintaining multiple tracks for career development within an organization would also be beneficial. An outplacement system is required for this approach.

Organizations must adopt a considerably broader perspective on individuals' career development beyond organizational boundaries.

Finally, managers need to adopt a novel approach for subordinates with a protean career orientation. They should understand the potential benefits of protean orientation for the organization and exploit this tendency. Managers are tasked with finding subordinates' career orientations and aligning management styles with them. They can motivate protean subordinates by providing flexible job changes, task assignments based on personal preferences, and sufficient educational opportunities covering diverse skills and knowledge. This approach would increase protean subordinates' commitment to—and inclination to identify themselves with—the organization.

This study has limitations. Simultaneously measuring both variables might have elevated the risk of common method bias. To evaluate the existence of a common method bias, we performed Harman's one-factor test (Harman, 1960). The results showed that the total variance for a single factor was 28.7%, which was less than 50%, suggesting that common method bias did not affect our data (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Also, although this study elucidates the effect of a protean career on organizational commitment by revealing the mediation effect of identification, uncovering this mediating relationship more specifically is still strongly needed. Various moderators can affect the mediation process. For example, individuals' proactive personalities can influence this relationship, creating a "moderated mediation effect" through multiple interactions among protean career, organizational identification, and commitment. Therefore, in future research, more elaborate approaches should be adopted by employing various individual differences, such as personality, ideology, and values.

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Appendix

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Items

<i>Protean career orientation</i>	I am in charge of my own career
	Ultimately, I depend upon myself to move my career forward
	I am responsible for my success or failure in my career
	Where my career is concerned, I am very much "my own person"
	Overall, I have a very independent, self-directed career
	In the past I have relied more upon myself than others to find a new job when necessary
	Freedom to choose my own career path is one of my most important values
	When development opportunities have not been offered by my company. I've sought them out on my own
	I'll follow my own guidance if my company asks me to do something that goes against my values
	In the past I have sided with my own values when the company has asked me to do something I don't agree with
	What I think about what is right in my career is more important to me than what my company thinks
	It doesn't matter much to me how other people evaluate the choices I make in my career
	People have told me that I march to the beat of my own drummer
	I navigate my own career, based upon my personal priorities, as opposed to my employer's
	What's most important to me is how I feel about my career success, not how other people feel
<i>Organizational identification</i>	When someone criticizes the company, it feels like a personal insult
	I am very interested in what others think about the company
	When I talk about the company, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'
	The company's successes are my successes
	When someone praises the company, it feels like a personal compliment
<i>Organizational commitment (Affective)</i>	If a story in the media criticized the company, I would feel embarrassed
	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization
	I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own
	I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization
	I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization
	I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization
<i>(Normative)</i>	This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me
	I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer
	Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now
	I would feel guilty if I left my organization now
	This organization deserves my loyalty
	I do not leave my organization right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it
<i>(Continuance)</i>	I owe a great deal to my organization
	Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire
	It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to
	Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now
	I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization
	If I had not already put so much of myself into this organization, I might consider working elsewhere
	One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives