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PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CAREER MOBILITY AMONG FINNISH BUSINESS SCHOOL GRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

This article studies the relationship between psychological capital and psychological career mobility through a sample of 624 Finnish business-school graduates. The findings indicate that psychological capital and its dimensions are positively related to internal and external psychological career mobility. A typology of four careerist types is defined from psychological capital and internal and external psychological career mobility dimensions through cluster analysis. The Finnish respondents could be divided into four distinct groups: Ambitious Careerist, Change-Oriented Careerist, Insecure Anti-Careerist, and Stable Career-Developer. The Ambitious Careerist demonstrated far higher levels of psychological capital than any other careerist type. At the end of the article, new insights related to psychological elements of career research are discussed.

Keywords: Psychological capital, psychological career mobility, boundaryless careers

PRACTICAL POINTS

The results will be helpful to students and career planners in enhancing their understanding of possible attitude-related strengths and of the potential obstacles they could face as they progress their careers.

In the case of human resources, mentoring, or career counseling, the relevant professionals could help employees with high capability but low

psychological capital to strengthen their attitude-based qualities and thus help them perform strongly in their work and to progress in their careers.

INTRODUCTION

Among scholars and practitioners, there is a growing interest in positive psychology. One of the viewpoints in vogue is *psychological capital*, which is formed from the constructs of self-efficacy (confidence), hope, optimism (positive contribution), and resilience in pursuit of success (Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio 2007). The term refers to internalized agency, motivation, perseverance, and success expectancies (Avey, Luthans, and Youssef 2010). The positive impact of psychological capital has been established in several studies, which indicates that psychological capital affects various elements in the life of organizations. For example, positive relationships have been shown to exist with efficiency, satisfaction, performance, and well being (Cole, Daly, and Mak 2009; Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman 2007). Psychological capital also affects career-aspects such as remuneration (Goldsmith, Veum, and Darity 1997) and unemployment rates (Cole, Daly, and Mak 2009).

In recent years, the importance of career mobility has increased because of changes in business life such as layoffs, restructuring, and globalization. Similarly, the recent economic depression in Finland has forced individuals into involuntary career mobility. Although well-educated employees tend to have higher turnover intentions (Henneberger and Sousa-Poza 2007), the empirical findings by Järnlström, Nyssölä, Piekkari, and Seppälä (2014) show that highly educated Finnish employees are not very mobile in their careers. Rather than changing organizations, they seem to prefer career mobility within the organization. This contradicts the recent views in career literature (Arthur and Rousseau 1996; DeFillippi and Arthur 1994), suggesting that careers are far more flexible and multidirectional than was previously reported.

Previous research on careers has mainly concentrated on physical mobility, primarily considering career moves between employers rather than psychological mobility (Briscoe and Hall 2006; Lazarova and Taylor 2009; Sullivan and Arthur 2006). For example, Lazarova and Taylor (2009) called for more research on psychological career mobility at the individual level. Psychological career mobility as understood here refers to the individual's capacity to cross internal and external career boundaries. It is not actual physical mobility, but rather mental mobility, which describes people's capacity and preparedness for career changes. Psychologically mobile individuals spend more time searching for a job and are more often invited to a selection

interview (Vansteenkiste, Verbruggen, and Sels 2013). As a predictor of physical mobility (Verbruggen 2012), psychological mobility is worthy of scholarly attention because it is generally accepted that attitudes are reliable predictors of behaviors (Ajzen and Fishbein 1977).

The activity and roles of individuals become increasingly important as they plan future careers (Briscoe, Hall, and Frautschy DeMuth 2006; Seibert, Crant, and Kraimer 1999). Similarly, their psychological qualities will influence their careers and career choices (Eby, Butts, and Lockwood 2003; Judge, Bono, Ilies, and Gerhardt 2002). The relationship between psychological capital and psychological career mobility has attracted research interest, but not yet in Finland. Our aim is to add knowledge in this research area in the Finnish context. We assume that high levels of psychological capital relate to greater psychological career mobility (e.g., Chen and Lim 2012). We also assume that a high level of psychological capital might convince individuals of their ability to face the possible challenges of career moves, lead to positive thinking about their career options, and give them the courage to advance their careers. It might also help them to overcome disappointment if their career does not always progress as planned.

The sample of this study represents Finnish business school graduates (those who have a master's-level degree or higher), and who have been working for approximately nineteen years since obtaining their master's degree. This study assumes that these people may have a more career-oriented way of thinking than people with other educational backgrounds (e.g., vocational education for service industries, nursing, or mechanics) making it especially interesting to see whether psychological capital has an impact on their psychological career mobility.

The article first provides a review of psychological capital and presents this study's results related to work and career concepts. The second part involves the study of the relationship between these concepts with correlations and the presentation of the four-dimension model of different career types. Finally, a detailed discussion of the results of our study is provided along with a review of its limitations and avenues for future research. Thus, this article makes a unique and independent contribution to the research fields of psychological capital and career mobility through its presentation of original data.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The following two sections concentrate first on psychological capital and its dimensions and also on the concepts of the boundaryless career and psychological career mobility. Psychological capital describes people's thoughts about and attitude toward

themselves in four dimensions: optimism, resilience, self-efficacy, and hope (e.g., Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, and Combs 2006). The boundaryless career means that employees move with ease within or between organizations, both vertically and horizontally (Briscoe, Hall, and DeMuth 2006; Lazarova and Taylor 2009). In order to retain the richness of the original concept of a boundaryless career (Arthur and Rousseau 1996), Lazarova and Taylor (2009) introduced their own typology, which distinguishes *the attitudes* to boundary crossing (i.e., psychological mobility) and actual boundary-crossing *behaviors* (i.e., physical mobility). In this paper, we focus on the latter, and therefore we study the relationship between psychological capital and psychological career mobility in the Finnish context.

Psychological Capital

The quality of working life and individuals' attitudes toward it have recently attracted considerable research attention. This attention includes the interest in positive psychology as championed by Seligman (1998). Psychological capital illustrates individuals' positive capacity in the components of optimism (Carver and Scheier 2003; Scheier and Carver 1985), resilience (Masten and Reed 2002), self-efficacy (Bandura 1997), and hope (Snyder, Irving, and Anderson 1991; Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon 2002). It is not regarded as an immutable trait, because it can be developed (Luthans et al. 2006). Although the four psychological capital dimensions have each garnered research attention in the literature, the four constructs (self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience) together form a resource that exists at a higher level of abstraction (Stajkovic 2006). These dimensions of psychological capital are addressed in the paragraphs below.

Self-efficacy refers to people's confidence in their ability to summon motivational and cognitive resources and to follow the course of action needed to successfully execute a specific task in a given context (Luthans and Youssef 2004). Of the four concepts, self-efficacy is the one that is well structured from both theoretical and practical standpoints. In fact, it is deeply rooted in Bandura's (1997) human social cognition theories. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) also studied self-efficacy as part of the SCCT-model (Social Cognitive Career Theory model). They claimed that self-efficacy is a central mechanism of career development. Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy belief set higher goals for themselves, put in more effort, and persist longer with a difficult task (Bandura 1997). Empirical evidence shows that self-efficacy affects task- and job-performance (e.g., Chen, Goddard, and Casper 2004), work engagement (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, and Taris 2008), the early phases

of an individual's career choice (Betz and Hackett 2006), and career success (Abele and Spurk 2009).

The approach to the *hope* construct follows Snyder's theory and research that defines it as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful agency (goal-directed energy) and pathways (planning to meet goals)" (Snyder, Irving, and Anderson 1991, 287). Agency is defined as the perceived determination to use all available means to reach desired goals (Snyder 1994; Tong, Fredrickson, Chang, and Lim 2010). Agency is conceptually related to self-efficacy (Bandura 1997); however, self-efficacy is a situation-specific evaluation that an individual can follow a specific course of action successfully, while agency is the perception that an individual will carry out goal-directed action targeting a wider range of goals (Snyder and Lopez 2009). Pathways are defined as the self-perceived ability to generate the means to reach desired goals or the ability to find alternative pathways when necessary (Snyder 1994; Tong et al. 2010). People engage in pathways thinking when they actively construct routes or make plans to achieve goals. Empirical studies show that hope promotes resilience, persistence, well being, mental health (Gallagher and Lopez 2009), and performance (Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, and Li 2005).

Optimism is claimed to be an explanatory style that attributes positive events to personal, permanent, and pervasive causes and interprets negative events in terms of external, temporary, and situation-specific factors (Seligman 1998). Optimism is based on two theories of optimism: the dispositional model (Scheier and Carver 1992) and the explanatory style model (Seligman 1998). *Dispositional optimism* is defined as a stable expectancy that good things will happen in life (Scheier and Carver 1992) and general beliefs about self-efficacy (Karademas 2006). It relates to the self-regulatory model of goal-seeking behavior, which examines how outcome expectancies affect goal-setting behaviors such as those required to achieve career outcomes. The *explanatory style model* (Seligman 1998) is a style of explaining negative events. In short, an optimistic explanatory style is the tendency to explain problems as having specific, temporary, and external causes. Conversely, a person with a pessimistic explanatory style is likely to cite global (non-specific), long-lasting, and internal causes of negative situations (Seligman 1995).

Optimism, whether demonstrated in the form of a positive outlook or an explanation of a negative situation, leads to positive emotions, motivation, and a commitment to achieve work-related goals (Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio 2007). It strongly influences the development of subjective-success constructs such as career

satisfaction (ibid. 2007), happiness, emotional and physical well being (Augusto-Landa, Pulido-Martos, and Lopez-Zafra 2011), and work engagement (Bakker et al. 2008). It has also been reported to have an impact on performance (Luthans et al. 2005). In fact, several researchers have noted the potential benefits conferred by optimism for people establishing career plans (Creed, Patton, and Bartrum 2002; Lucas and Wanberg 1995).

Resilience was initially defined as the capacity to rebound from adversity, conflict, and failure, but the definition was subsequently widened to include the reaction even to apparently positive and challenging events, like progress and increased responsibility (Luthans 2002; Luthans and Youssef 2004). Resilience may be a process as well as an outcome (Holaday and McPhearson 1997). Hence, it is something that demands constant effort in challenging situations. Research findings have shown that resilience results from an optimistic explanatory style (Seligman 1995, 2011). In addition, Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2007) highlight the connection between resilience and both dispositional and explanatory style optimism in predicting work performance and satisfaction. Career resilience is frequently discussed in vocational behavior literature. According to Holaday and McPhearson (1997), career resilience is exemplified in the ways people cope with the everyday stresses of working life, and the study concludes that self-efficacy, hope, and optimism in particular are related to work, while self-efficacy and optimism relate to career and career choices.

Psychological capital as a resource is more powerful than its dimensions alone (Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, and Li 2005). Scholars have examined the concept of psychological capital and established that it has many positive impacts, for example, on individuals' satisfaction, performance, and commitment, and whether they thrive at work. For example, the findings by Walumbwa, Peterson, Avolio, and Hartnell (2010) show that a leader's psychological capital relates positively to follower performance mediated by follower psychological capital. According to Paterson, Luthans, and Jeung (2013), psychological capital results in significantly higher levels of agentic work behaviors. Luthans, Norman, Avolio, and Avey (2008) suggest that employees' psychological capital mediates the relationship between a supportive climate and the employees' performance. It even has an impact on an individual's real wage (Goldsmith, Veum, and Darity 1997). Cole, Daly, and Mak (2009) found that psychological capital had a partial mediating effect on employment status and well being, and that individuals with lower levels of psychological capital were at greater risk of being unemployed. Most of these studies have

been cross-sectional, but longitudinal data have also provided support for a causal relationship between psychological capital and performance, rather than vice versa (Peterson, Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, and Zhang 2011).

The Boundaryless Career and Psychological Career Mobility

Boundaryless careers are divided theoretically into those relating to physical career mobility and those characterized by psychological mobility (Sullivan and Arthur 2006). *Physical career mobility* refers to actual physical career mobility (e.g., job change, organization change, geographical change), whereas *psychological career mobility* refers to an individual's attitudes and capacity for future career moves, that is, the individual's capacity to cross internal and external career boundaries (see Arthur, Khapova, and Wilderom 2005; Sullivan and Arthur 2006), but it does not involve an actual job change. We expect psychological career mobility to be even more important than physical mobility because recent findings by Verbruggen (2012) indicate that psychological career mobility is positively related to physical career mobility. As such, Verbruggen's findings offer support for the idea that attitudes are reliable predictors of behaviors (Ajzen and Fishbein 1977).

To date, psychological career mobility has received less research attention than physical career mobility, which may be a result of the unclear concepts, meanings, and measures attributed to the latter (Sullivan and Baruch 2009). However, Forret, Sullivan, and Mainiero (2010) called for greater research focus on psychological career mobility than on physical mobility, and for the development of its operationalization. In line with recent research (Forrier, Sels, and Stynen 2009; Forret, Sullivan, and Mainiero 2010; Itani, Järnlström, and Piekkari 2015; Vansteenkiste, Verbruggen, and Sels 2013; Verbruggen 2012), we intend to improve the knowledge of this research area.

Although some years have passed since Lazarova and Taylor (2009) separated internal and external psychological mobility, with the exception of the work of Itani, Järnlström, and Piekkari (2015), the two variants have not yet been studied empirically. An internal psychological career refers here to the capability and desire to be mobile within the boundaries of a single organization. An external psychological career refers here to the capability and desire for organizational mobility.

The boundaryless career literature refers to a career driven by the person, not the organization (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Briscoe, Hall, and Frautschy DeMuth 2006). Increased agency over their career indicates that individuals take responsibility, make their own career choices, and have a personal perception of career opportunities (Hall 2002). According to Eby, Butts, and Lockwood (2003), those

employees who are proactive, flexible, open to new experiences, and understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses tend to manage better in today's workplace than people lacking those personal characteristics. Similarly, Forret and Dougherty (2001) found that individuals who scored higher in extraversion and self-esteem were more likely to engage in networking behaviors, which should help them navigate non-traditional careers. Forrier, Sels, and Stynen (2009) discuss movement capital, in which they include human capital, social capital, self-awareness, and adaptability. Similarly, psychological qualities such as extraversion and openness to experience have been related to both internal and external upward mobility (Judge et al. 2002). Sullivan and Arthur (2006) argued that career competences, gender, cultural background, and individual differences could be potential predictors of psychological career mobility. Recent empirical findings by Itani, Järnlström, and Piekkari (2015) support the idea of career competences as a predictor of psychological career mobility. In that last research, the respondents who possessed the best language skills also demonstrated the highest levels of career mobility, both psychological and physical.

Most literature on boundaryless careers seems to concentrate on the individual's own responsibility and voluntary transitions, but the approach has not escaped criticism. Critics argue that it is only applicable to a minority of cases (Pringle and Mallon 2003) and does not sufficiently address career effects for people with limited skills to market (Inkson, Roper, and Ganesh 2008). Furthermore, some European career researchers have questioned the strong emphasis placed on individual agency and free choice of careers on the grounds that there are structural restrictions that influence career behavior (e.g., Arnold and Cohen 2008; Dany 2003; Mayrhofer, Meyer, and Steyrer 2007). Our study adopts a similar line and illustrates that individual differences can influence psychological career mobility.

As shown above, to be able to access career opportunities, individuals need resources, which determine the opportunities for career mobility. Hence, we argue that those individuals with a high level of psychological capital are more open to and have more positive feelings about pursuing both internal and external career routes to their goals. Psychological capital is associated with flexibility and adaptability, which are particularly useful resources in the current unpredictable career environment (Sullivan and Arthur 2006; Sullivan and Baruch 2009). Individuals with high levels of psychological capital may sustain strong expectations of their own employability or may seek personal growth outside the workplace. Based on the agency approach within the area of boundaryless careers, those with high levels of

psychological capital may actively pursue career choices in line with their intrinsic interests (Baruch 2006; Chen and Lim 2012; Zacher 2014). In contrast, those individuals who restrict their career options tend to have fewer psychological resources, more negative feelings, and a lower level of psychological capital.

DATA AND METHODS

The following sections report how we collected data from Finnish business school graduates and what kinds of measures were used in the subsequent analysis.

Data Collection

Data were collected through an Internet survey in the spring of 2011. The survey was developed and translated by scholars of the University of Vaasa and Aalto University, and it included several sub-themes, such as career attitudes, language competence, job and career satisfaction, psychological capital (PsyCap), and career mobility. The survey was carried out in cooperation with the Finnish union that represents qualified Finnish business school graduates (The Finnish Association of Business School Graduates, SEFE) and used its member contact information register. The survey questionnaire was created based on existing measures. SEFE sent an e-mail invitation (in Finnish and Swedish) to a sample of 3,500 of its members. Of the group selected, 15 percent were Swedish-speaking, as that percentage equals the proportion in the entire body of membership. The self-employed were excluded from the sample because they were not the target of this research. The e-mail invitation included direct links to both language versions of the questionnaire. A reminder message was sent approximately two weeks after the first invitation. A total of 629 surveys were returned, giving a response rate of 18 percent. Five cases were rejected for being unrepresentative (the subjects were unemployed at the time) but the remaining 624 cases were accepted for further analysis.

The majority of the respondents were Finnish speakers (85 percent). More than half of the sample were women (60.4 percent), and the average age was 44 (s.d. = 10.5). The majority of respondents (46.0 percent) had families with young or school-age children; 37.5 percent of the sample had a spouse, and the remainder of the respondents were single (17.5 percent). The average length of work experience was nineteen years, and the major positions represented were middle management and experts (e.g., Human Resources [HR] professionals).

Measures

Below we explain how the measures of psychological career mobility and psychological capital were formulated. Both questionnaires were analyzed with principal

component factoring with Varimax rotation. Factor analyses are used to simplify the expression of many items that measure the same thing to present just a few major items (Kline 1994). Varimax is probably the most popular rotation method. For Varimax, a simple solution means that each factor has a small number of large loadings and a large number of zero (or small) loadings. This simplifies the interpretation because each original variable tends to be associated with one of the factors, and each factor represents only a small number of variables (Abdi 2003).

After setting the factors, their reliability was tested with Cronbach alpha-analysis. Cronbach's alpha will generally increase as the intercorrelations among test items increase, and it is thus known as an internal consistency estimate of the reliability of test scores. Because intercorrelations among test items are maximized when all items measure the same construct, it is widely believed to indirectly indicate the degree to which a set of items measures a single unidimensional latent construct. A commonly accepted rule of thumb for describing acceptable internal consistency is a score of 0.7 or higher (George and Mallery 2003).

Psychological career mobility was measured with twelve items adopted and modified from a study by De Vos, Dewettinck, and Buyens (2008). A similar type of measure was used recently by Itani, Järnlström, and Piekkari (2015). The items refer to preparedness for career mobility and the willingness to pursue it either in the current organization (internal psychological mobility) or outside it (external psychological mobility). Answers were given on a 7-point Likert scale, anchored with *totally disagree* (1) and *totally agree* (7). Principal component factoring with Varimax rotation was performed to ensure the validity of the psychological career mobility dimensions. There were two different types of mobility identified: internal and external mobility. Here, internal mobility means both vertical and horizontal mobility within the current organization, whereas external mobility refers to vertical and horizontal mobility either outside the current organization or within a subsidiary abroad. *Internal psychological mobility* was measured with four items that included the following: "I have a strong ability to develop my career horizontally in my current organization," and "I prefer developing my career horizontally in my current organization." The Cronbach's alpha-coefficient of this factor was 0.743. *External psychological mobility* was measured with eight items that included the following: "I have good abilities to develop my career vertically outside my current organization," and "I prefer to develop my career horizontally outside my current organization." The Cronbach's alpha was 0.847.

Psychological capital was measured with 12 items, which describe the four

relevant dimensions of psychological capital: hope, optimism, resilience, and self-esteem. Responses were placed on a 7-point Likert scale, anchored with *totally disagree* (1) and *totally agree* (7). The psychological capital questionnaire was modified from that of Luthans et al. (2007). Again, principal component factoring with Varimax rotation was conducted to ensure the validity of the psychological capital dimensions. Hope was measured with three items, including “At this moment I am achieving those goals I have set.” The Cronbach’s alpha of this scale was 0.833. Optimism was measured with measures such as “I am optimistic about my future,” and the Cronbach’s alpha of this scale was 0.829. Third, resilience was measured with three items, including “I recover from disappointments at work quickly.” The Cronbach’s alpha of this scale was 0.770. Finally, self-efficacy was measured with four items, including “I trust my skills even in challenging situations.” The Cronbach’s alpha of this final scale was 0.798.

Analysis

After principal component factoring with Varimax rotation component analysis, the results were acquired with correlation and cluster analysis. The first step was to conduct correlation analysis to determine the relation of psychological capital to psychological and physical career mobility. Correlation can refer to any departure of two or more random variables from independence, but technically it refers to any of several more specialized types of relationship between mean values (Dowdy and Wearden 1983). Cluster analysis or clustering is the task of grouping a set of objects in such a way that objects in the same group (cluster) are more similar to each other than to those in other groups. Typical cluster models include centroid models (i.e., the *k*-means algorithm), which represent each cluster by a single mean vector (Everitt 2011). We conducted *k*-means cluster analysis to investigate the applicability of a four-quadrant model and revealed how psychological career mobility (internal mobility and external mobility) related to psychological capital. The cluster analysis led to individuals being assigned to one of four groups, and subsequent analysis was conducted on those four groups.

Differences in psychological capital, psychological career mobility, and physical career mobility were tested using one-way analysis of variance modeling procedures. One-way analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) is a technique used to compare means of three or more samples. The ANOVA produces an F-statistic, the ratio of the variance calculated among the means to the variance within the samples. If the group means are drawn from populations with the same mean values, the variance

between the group means should be lower than the variance of the samples, following the central limit theorem. A higher ratio therefore implies that the samples were drawn from populations with different mean values (Howell 2013). Following the ANOVA test, post-hoc tests were conducted with Tukey's Studentized Range Test in order to discover the intrinsic differences between groups. In the post-hoc analysis we had a choice between using either Tukey's range test or Duncan's new multiple range test because both are intended to analyze normally distributed data. They can be used as post-hoc analyses to test which of two groups' means there is a significant difference between (pairwise comparisons) (Howell 2013).

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, and correlations between the measures are presented in Table 1.

With regard to psychological mobility, correlation analysis indicated that psychological capital and all its dimensions are statistically significantly related to psychological career mobility, both external and internal forms of psychological mobility. The higher the level of psychological capital, the greater will be the psychological career mobility.

Further investigation tested whether cluster analysis would reveal four distinct groups representing the four psychological career types, and how psychological capital relates specifically to different types of psychological career mobility (Table 2). Aggregate measures of internal and external career mobility were taken to conduct a *k*-means cluster analysis. This resulted in four clusters representing the following groups: (1) The first cluster has respondents with high internal career mobility (mean: 5.33) and high external career mobility (mean: 5.05). The mean of psychological capital is highest here (5.52) compared to other clusters. It covers 26.5 percent of the sample and is labeled *Ambitious Careerist*. (2) The second cluster represents 9.0 percent of the sample, having low internal career mobility (mean: 2.41) and high external career mobility (mean 5.31). The mean of psychological capital is the second highest (5.12) here. This is the least popular cluster and is labeled *Change-Oriented Careerist*. (3) The third cluster covers 28.0 percent of the sample and shows low internal career mobility (mean 2.68) and also low external career mobility (mean: 3.15). The psychological capital was lowest here (mean 4.88). This cluster is labeled *Insecure Anti-Careerist*. The final cluster has internal career mobility at a high level (mean 4.83) and external career mobility as low (mean: 3.30). The psychological capital was second lowest and represents 36.5 percent of the sample.

| Variable | Mean (s.d) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|------------------------------------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| 1. Psychological capital | 4.73 (0.78) | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| 2. Hope | 4.69 (1.20) | .732** | 1.00 | | | | | |
| 3. Optimism | 5.42 (1.07) | .738** | .519** | 1.00 | | | | |
| 4. Resilience | 4.80 (1.12) | .834** | .447** | .537** | 1.00 | | | |
| 5. Self-efficacy | 5.57 (0.94) | .855** | .506** | .477** | .598** | 1.00 | | |
| 6. Internal Psychological Mobility | 4.14 (1.44) | .216** | .290** | .194** | .106** | .049 | 1.00 | |
| 7. External Psychological Mobility | 3.90 (1.19) | .337** | .245** | .168** | .236** | .147** | .229** | 1.00 |

Table 1. Correlation Analyses. Note: The numbers in the parentheses represent the standard deviation for that item. The preceding number is the mean for that item.

** p<.01.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p><i>Internal Mobility High</i></p> | <p>4. Internal High/External Low N=228, 36.5%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal, mean: 4.83 • External, mean: 3.30 <p>Psychological capital, mean: 5.01</p> <p>“Stable Career-Developer”</p> | <p>1. Internal High/External High N=165, 26.5%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal, mean: 5.33 • External, mean: 5.05 <p>Psychological capital, mean: 5.52</p> <p>“Ambitious Careerist”</p> |
| <p><i>Internal Mobility Low</i></p> | <p>3. Internal Low/External Low N=175, 28.0%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal, mean: 2.68 • External, mean: 3.15 <p>Psychological capital, mean: 4.88</p> <p>“Insecure Anti-Careerist”</p> | <p>2. Internal Low/External High N=56, 9.0%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal, mean: 2.41 • External, mean: 5.31 <p>Psychological capital, mean: 5.12</p> <p>“Change-Oriented Careerist”</p> |
| | <p><i>External Mobility Low</i></p> | <p><i>External Mobility High</i></p> |

Table 2. K-Means Cluster Analysis.

This is the largest cluster and is labeled *Stable Career-Developer*. All the respondents could be classified into one of the four clusters.

Table 3 presents the results of the ANOVA analyses. The relationship between psychological capital and the clusters was examined with the ANOVA. Psychological capital and all its dimensions recorded the highest means in cluster 1, *Ambitious Careerist*, and the lowest in cluster 3, *Insecure Anti-Careerist*, excluding resilience. The clusters differed statistically from one another. Psychological capital and its dimensions were significantly higher for *Ambitious Careerists* than for *Insecure Anti-Careerists* and *Stable Career-Developers*. Additionally, *Ambitious Careerists* recorded significantly higher values of hope, resilience, and total psychological capital than *Change-Oriented Careerists* did. *Stable Career-Developers* had significantly higher levels of hope than did *Insecure Anti-Careerists*. Hope was the most differentiated factor in the

| | PsyCap | Hope | Optimism | Resilience | Self-Efficacy |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Mutual High Career Mobility "Ambitious Careerist" | 5.52 (0.69) | 5.17 (0.98) | 5.72 (0.89) | 5.23 (0.96) | 5.96 (0.76) |
| 3. Mutual Low Career Mobility "Insecure Anti-Careerist" | 4.88 (0.87) | 4.25 (1.22) | 5.24 (1.11) | 4.65 (1.22) | 4.88 (0.87) |
| 4. Internal Career Mobility High, External High "Stable Career-Developer" | 5.01 (0.85) | 4.69 (1.16) | 5.36 (1.07) | 4.58 (1.05) | 5.01 (0.85) |
| 2. External Career Mobility High, Internal Low "Change-Oriented Careerists" | 5.12 (0.92) | 4.64 (1.37) | 5.33 (1.20) | 4.79 (1.20) | 5.12 (0.92) |
| <i>F-value</i> | 19.36*** | 18.24*** | 6.50*** | 12.75*** | 16.09*** |
| Significant Comparisons | 1>2,3,4 | 1>2,3,4 4>3 | 1>3,4 | 1>2,3,4 | 1>3,4 |

Table 3. Analysis of Variance Results Comparing Psychological Capital and Psychological Mobility Types.

Note: F = variation between sample means / variation within the samples.

Multiple comparisons were computed with Tukey’s Studentized Range (HSD) Test.

** p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

effect on psychological career mobility, although all factors did have a considerable impact.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study revealed the significant relationship between psychological capital and psychological career mobility among Finnish business school graduates. More specifically, all the dimensions of psychological capital—hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy—were related to psychological career mobility. Earlier studies indicate that self-efficacy and optimism in particular are career-related issues (Abele and Spruk 2009; Betz and Hackett 2006; Creed, Patton, and Bartrum 2002; Lucas and Wanberg 1995). The present study contributes to this research stream by showing that psychological capital and all its dimensions are statistically related to

psychological career mobility. Hence, the results support the idea that psychological capital is associated with boundaryless career-related attitudes.

The clusters analyzed formed a four-group typology of psychological career mobility: *Ambitious Careerist*, *Insecure Anti-Careerist*, *Stable Career-Developer*, and *Change-Oriented Careerist* groups. These empirical findings were consistent with the literature contending that psychological mobility can be meaningfully conceptualized as internal and external continua. Therefore, the findings strongly support recent theorizing around boundaryless careers (Sullivan and Arthur 2006; Lazarova and Taylor 2009).

This study showed that a surprisingly high proportion of business school graduates can be described as *Insecure Anti-Careerists*. Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, and Erez (2001) proposed a construct they termed job embeddedness that explains why people do not switch employers. Some reported that the reasons for staying are greater job security and employment stability (Ng, Butts, Vandenberg, Dejoy, and Wilson, 2006), in addition to older age (Blomme, Van Rheede, and Tromp 2010). According to the current study, low psychological capital may also be one of the reasons behind job embeddedness. In other words, a deficit of psychological capital may create a desire for enhanced job security and encourage the avoidance of the risks inherent in changing careers. The Finns included in the sample might be expected to be more progressive in their careers and have more belief in their skills than, for example, people in a more practical field, such as nurses. It would be interesting to compare psychological career mobility in different fields and also different disciplines within higher education. However, one reason for this condition may be Finnish culture. It may be that Finns are more modest than other nationalities, a supposition that is backed by earlier studies indicating that Finnish people have lower psychological capital than people from Portugal and Bulgaria (Brandt, Gomes, and Boyanova 2011). It seems that the low psychological capital of the *Insecure Anti-Careerists* may have persuaded them that their opportunities to leave their employer are limited and that they lack the skills necessary to manage new work challenges. More qualitative research on this group would be necessary to explain this connection.

Some studies indicate that national culture is important to boundaryless careers (e.g., Dany 2003). Although the findings here suggest that Finnish economic and cultural elements support boundaryless careers to some extent, the findings of physical career mobility among highly educated Finnish graduates offer less support for the notion of boundaryless careers (see Järnlström et al. 2014). However,

if individuals take positive steps to advance their careers, they can face barriers triggered by their career history, occupational identity, or institutional constraints (King, Burke, and Pemberton 2005). Similarly, our findings support the idea that individual differences affect psychological career mobility (see Sullivan and Arthur 2006). The level of individuals' psychological capital either increases or inhibits their potential career options. Although our sample involved highly educated people, they differed in their career possibilities: some of these highly educated people were more positive toward their career mobility chances than others. Therefore, our main findings are in line with some of the European career researchers, who have questioned the strong emphasis placed on individual agency and free choice in boundaryless careers (see Arnold and Cohen 2008; Dany 2003; Mayrhofer, Meyer, and Steyrer 2007). Hence, the findings of the current research suggest that it is logical to conclude that psychological capital has a positive effect on future career mobility capabilities. The present study also updates the list of possible predictors of psychological career mobility (Sullivan and Arthur 2006; Itani, Järnlström, and Piekkari 2015).

The boundaryless career literature seems to suggest that career mobility is always a positive issue and that it increases career success (Forrier, Sels, and Stynen 2009). Nevertheless, we recognize the possibility that a high level of psychological capital combined with a high level of psychological career mobility could have negative implications for both an individual and an employer. A person may be less committed and, for example, may experience high levels of stress because of a possible career transition within the organization or outside of it. Although organizational change may encompass positive issues such as better person-organization fit (e.g., better fit of skills), it may also be a risky investment in a person's career because accrued benefits can be lost. Likewise, actual external career mobility, a possible consequence of external psychological career mobility (Verbruggen 2012), can be unattractive to an employer because that employer may suffer from the loss of competencies and incurs recruitment or re-training costs (see Bothma and Roodt 2013).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Our findings showed that some highly educated employees seem to have a so-called bounded career (King, Burke, and Pemberton 2005), which means that they do not seem to have the capacity or the preparedness for internal or external mobility. It would be important to somehow enrich their jobs at their work places, for example

through mentoring, in order to sustain their levels of motivation. Mentoring is related to the career success of both mentees and mentors (Allen, Lentz, and Day 2006).

Reasons for a lack of enthusiasm for mobility can include the facts that employees are happy in their current jobs, their life-situations are not conducive to a move (too much stress or problems with relocating), or that they are no longer young. On the other hand, it may be that those people with low psychological capital and low internal and external career mobility are those described as alienated in the career literature. Alienation from work can be defined as a sense of separation or estrangement extending to the self-image (personal alienation) and people's social relationships (social alienation) (Chiaburu, Diaz, and De Vos 2013). Chiaburu, Diaz, and De Vos (2013) have argued that individuals who feel disconnected or alienated from their work might have lower levels of career motivation or self-management, which will ultimately hinder success in career terms. Alienation can have negative consequences for both individuals and organizations (e.g., Hirschfeld and Feild 2000). It may be that psychological capital is one of the reasons for alienation because it is connected to an individual's self-image.

Insecure Anti-Careerists could benefit from support or coaching to release their potential. It has been argued that individuals' psychological capital could be developed by their leaders, and in the case of this group, it would be an approach worth trying. For example, an employee's efficacy could be developed through persuasion and encouragement from supportive leaders (Bandura 1997; Wood and Bandura 1989). Hope, agency, and pathways thinking can be developed through systematic attention, mentoring, and feedback from leaders (Yammarino and Dubinsky 1990). Individuals' optimism about their careers is likely to be enhanced by working with a leader they can trust and who they believe takes a personal interest in them (Yammarino and Dubinsky 1992). Finally, a high-quality relationship with a leader is likely to enhance resilience as well (Masten 2001; Masten and Reed 2002).

The present study has some limitations that should be noted. The first restriction relates to its cross-sectional data. This partly restricts the ability to interpret the results relating to psychological capital and career mobility. Further research using a longitudinal design might unravel the causal relationships between psychological capital and psychological career mobility. On a connected note, the single method of data collection might mean that common method bias could have influenced the correlations between variables. While we acknowledge the possibility of common method bias, it seems to be a frequently cited limitation of survey research

(Spector 2006). Common method bias should account for significant correlations among variables measured via a single method (Spector 2006). Our analysis showed that some of the variables did not correlate at all (see Table 1). Even where we found a statistical significance between variables, the correlation was quite low, excluding psychological capital and its dimensions. The sample did, however, include both men and women from different age groups, branches, and organizations. Harman's one-factor test was used to test for common method variance by including the variables of the study in an unrotated factor analysis (Podsakoff and Organ 1986). The results broke down into several factors, offering some evidence against the presence of method variance issues with the data. Hence, common method bias seems unlikely to have affected the results.

The second restriction relates to the response rate of the study, which limits the ability to generalize the results to those who did not respond to the questionnaire. However, the response rate seems adequate for a survey study, and the sample size seems to be sufficient for purpose.

The third restriction relates to measures and analysis. Some career mobility directions were not covered in the present study. In line with Lazarova and Taylor (2009) and Forret, Sullivan, and Mainiero (2010), we view the further development of the psychological career mobility measure as an important aim. Finally, we also recognize the limitations of the analysis. The choice of cluster analysis can be criticized on methodological grounds, and accordingly we would welcome future research that attempts to replicate the results. Gender and age could have an impact on both psychological capital and career mobility, which should be taken into account in further studies (e.g., Forret, Sullivan, and Mainiero 2010). Even so, the results are promising for future research in this area.

Overall, the Finnish sample may differ from samples from other countries. Finnish people have recorded lower psychological capital dimensions than Bulgarian and Portuguese people (Brandt, Gomes, and Boyanova 2011), but more comparative studies would be required to reveal the relations between samples from different countries. It would be worth studying whether psychological capital can diminish (or grow) over the course of an individual's career. Several disappointments experienced in the course of a career may diminish psychological capital. Moreover, people from other educational backgrounds could be studied, and it would also be worth studying how successful the different groups are in their current careers. Both objective and subjective career success could be covered.

In conclusion, we have explored the relationship between psychological capital and the career mobility of Finnish business school graduates. Our research suggests that this relationship is relevant. We conclude that career mobility is strongly connected to career resources or capital, and psychological capital seems to be strongly related to psychological career mobility. This study broadens the research area of psychological capital, and these results are a logical extension of earlier results indicating that psychological capital affects an individual's performance (Luthans et al. 2005), wage (Goldsmith, Veum, and Darity 1997), and status (Cole, Daly, and Mak 2009). While more research is certainly warranted, the current study from Finland provides a starting point for scholars interested in this research area.

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