

REVIEW

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A scientometric analysis of career anchor/ orientation research from 1975 to 2023

Asegid Getachew Woldeamanuel^{1*}

Abstract

Career has traditionally been associated with its external dimension. However, the emergence of the concept of career anchor/orientation broadened its scope to include an internal component that encompasses the subjective desire, values and talents of individuals. The current scientometric review focused on analyzing career anchor/orientation research over the last five decades (1975–2023). The articles/documents used for analysis were searched and located from a purposely selected highly recognized databases. A total of 111 documents (articles, books, book chapters, conference proceedings) were selected for analysis. The result showed that the conceptualization of career anchor/orientation has remained stable with only some changes and emergence of few rival models. While the existing literature has provided valuable insights into the concept of career anchors, there are several gaps that need to be addressed. Future research should strive to expand the current understanding of career anchors by exploring additional career anchors, investigating their organizational implications, examining their interaction with other individual and contextual factors, and studying their manifestation in non-traditional work settings. The research in the area has shown a swinging trend with lots of ups and downs. Career anchor/orientation publications were spread over more than 24 countries. The US is ranked 1st with 28% of the total publication and is followed by the Asia continent and the UK. Africa, only represented by two countries (South Africa and Nigeria), is ranked fourth. Most of the empirical research have mainly focused on assessing the distribution of the dimensions of career anchor/orientation with few relating it with job settings and outcomes. It is recommended that career anchor/orientation scientometric analysis should be done by searching articles from more databases. More to this, as national contexts and cultural differences play a critical role in shaping career anchor/orientation of individuals it is suggested that more research needs to be done across a number of countries.

Keywords Career anchor, Career orientation, Career, Distribution, Scientometric review

Introduction

Two dominant and diverging streams of thought have shaped the evolution of career theory and research [14]. The first relates to an organizational defined external aspect of career and the second pertains to an internal dimension associated with values talents and desires of individuals [10, 33, 43]. The external aspect of career

refers to the progression that career occupants make through various organizational positions. The internal aspect relates to a cluster of self-perceived needs, talents and values that shape individuals career decision [42]. It is that part of the self-concept which individuals cannot change even when they are confronted with a difficult career choice [41]. This self-concept has three components which together build what [40], p. 125) refers to as career anchors:

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1. Self-perceived talents and abilities.
2. Self-perceived motives and abilities.
3. Self-perceived attitudes and values.

The term “career orientation,” which was coined [12], is also interchangeably used to refer to career anchor. Career anchors/orientations are considered a key concept in career management [49] and affect career choice of individuals. Empirical research indicates that a congruence between job setting and career anchor/orientation of professionals is associated with various job-related outcomes. It affects the career choice of individuals [11, 31, 46] and their decision to move from one job to the other [26], affects the level of satisfaction on their job [11, 25], determines employees commitment to their organization [2, 21, 25, 32] and intentions to leave their organization [2, 7, 25], affects individuals career identity and career satisfaction [47], determines the career development strategy of organizations [50] and affects incentive systems of organizations [30].

Most of the studies undertaken in the area of career anchor/orientation are either empirical or theoretical in nature. More to this the existing literature-based reviews are mostly systematic and integrative. For example, a review made by Cabot and Gagnon [6] focused on a systemic review of career anchor studies with the objective of understanding the career dynamics of IT professionals. Hirschi and Koen [22] undertook a review and integration of literature on career orientation and career self-management. Hall et al. [20] performed an integrative review of the literature related to protean career (a form of internal career).

The existing literature related to career anchor/orientation barely provides information that can help researchers understand the patterns, trends, publication outlets, geographical distribution and changes in conceptualization. This necessitates the undertaking of a scientometric analysis that investigates the patterns and trends of career anchor literature.

Scientometric analysis involves quantitative analysis of the bibliometric content of published documents. Its use has expanded due to the wide availability of published contents (articles, books, proceedings, etc.) on the internet. The analysis enables researchers to investigate perspectives and patterns related to a specific issue. It can also provide vital information regarding the seminal authors in the field and the impact and influence they have created and also contribute to the creation of valuable insight pertaining the rate of growth in publication and the geographic distribution of studies.

More to the above scientometric analysis enables researcher to understand the pattern of communication and collaboration between authors (co-authorship and

co-citations) [4]. Bibliometric studies are also used to examine the history and structure of a field, the flow of information into a field, the growth of literature, patterns of collaboration amongst scientists, impacts of journals, and the long-term citation impact of a work [17].

The exhaustive search made by the author to locate scientometric review articles related to career anchor/orientation in various known data bases resulted in zero articles. However, bibliometric review pertaining to one issue closely related to career development was found. The review was undertaken by Jiang et al. [29] with the objective analyzing the intellectual basis and tracking the evolution of major themes related to career proactivity. Jansen et al. [28] also performed a bibliometric review of 60 years of research related to career success with the objective of showing the citation evolution of papers on the subject, and identifying the most related articles, as well as the most related journals.

This review is done with the objective of addressing the apparent lack of scientometric analysis specifically related to career anchor/orientation.

More specifically the review has the following objectives:

- Mapping the major milestone in the conceptualization of career anchor/orientation.
- Assessing the trend in the growth of career anchor/orientation research in the selected period.
- Assessing the geographic distribution of career anchor/orientation research.
- Identifying the nature and major focus of career anchor/orientation research.
- Performing keyword and citation analysis.
- Identifying the major outlets for career anchor/orientation research.

The rest of the article is organized as follows: Section two provides the procedure followed to search and select documents relevant for analysis. The third section presents and discusses the finding. The fourth section concluded based on the finding. The last section discusses the limitation of the analysis and sets direction for future research.

Search and selection procedure

The article search for the review commenced by first selecting major research databases that were widely recognized for indexing very impactful and reputable journals. Initially the review specifically considered databases included in Table 1 to search for career anchor/career

Table 1 Databases considered for searching articles

Indexing database	Number	Percentage (%)
AJOL	1	1
Elsevier	15	15
Emerald	14	14
Jstore	5	5
Proquest	27	28
Research gate	6	6
Sage	10	10
Taylor and Francis	8	8
Wiley	11	11

Table 2 Additional search results

Nature	Number
Book chapter:	1
Conference proceeding	7
Master’s thesis	2
Seminal books	3
Doctoral thesis	1

orientation related articles published between 1975 and 2023.

Two key words, Career anchor/career orientation were joined with a Boolean operator “AND” to search and locate the required articles. The search turned a total of 91 empirical, conceptual and review articles published in the selected period.

The search was further extended to include seminal books and book chapters originally written by authors who developed the concept, conference proceeding and masters and doctoral thesis (see Table 2 for the result of the search). While searching for these items, the following exclusion criteria were developed:

- Masters and doctoral thesis not indexed in a known university or institutional data base (10 items excluded).
- Conference proceeding appearing in a low impact journal with a questionable reputability (5 items excluded).
- Newspaper articles and opinions posted in blogs (2 items excluded).

By applying the above exclusion criteria, the following were selected for the review.

The total number of documents considered for the review added up to 111(97 journal articles and 14

additional documents). The analysis proceeded by first summarizing the biographical data (Author, year of publication, title, journal, keyword, etc.) related to each publication in a spreadsheet. The data related to the number of citations for each document is accessed from google scholar. Keyword analysis was made by inserting all the keyword extracted from each article in a word cloud generator.

Presentation and discussion

Major milestone in the conceptualization of career anchor/ orientation

The concept of career anchor originated out of a longitudinal study undertaken by Schein and his research associates (see Fig. 1 for major conceptualization milestones). Schein [38] originally developed five career anchor dimensions: technical/functional competence; managerial competence; security and stability; autonomy and independence; and entrepreneurial creativity and [40] latter added three dimension making the total to be eight: service and dedication to a cause; pure challenge; and lifestyle [25] established the factor structure of the 41 items identified by Schein [40]. Igbaria et al. [24] capitalized on Shien’s career anchor model and further refined it to develop a short-term career anchor measure (composed of only 25 items),they also increased the dimension of career anchor to 9 by splitting the original security anchor proposed by [40] in to job security and geographic security.

Other authors have also played a crucial role in broadening the conceptual landscape of career anchor. For example, DeLong [12] introduced the widely used term “career orientation” (closely related in meaning to “career anchor”) and introduced three career orientation dimensions: identity, service and variety. Derr [13]introduced four dimensions of career anchor/orientation: getting secure, getting high; getting free; and getting balanced. Driver [15]measured career orientation with a new four sets of dimensions: transitory, steady-state, linear, and spiral. Feldman & Bolino [16]reclassified the career orientation dimensions of Schein [41] by categorizing them in to three broad themes: Talent based anchors (which contained Managerial competence, Technical/functional competence, and Entrepreneurial creativity,Need based anchors (included: Security and stability, Autonomy and independence and, Lifestyle); and Value based anchors(dedication to a cause and pure challenge).

The conceptualization of career anchor by Edgar Schein is still considered influential and dominant. Majority of empirical researches (although the content of the attributes used to measure the dimensions originally identified by Schein might change from situation to situation)

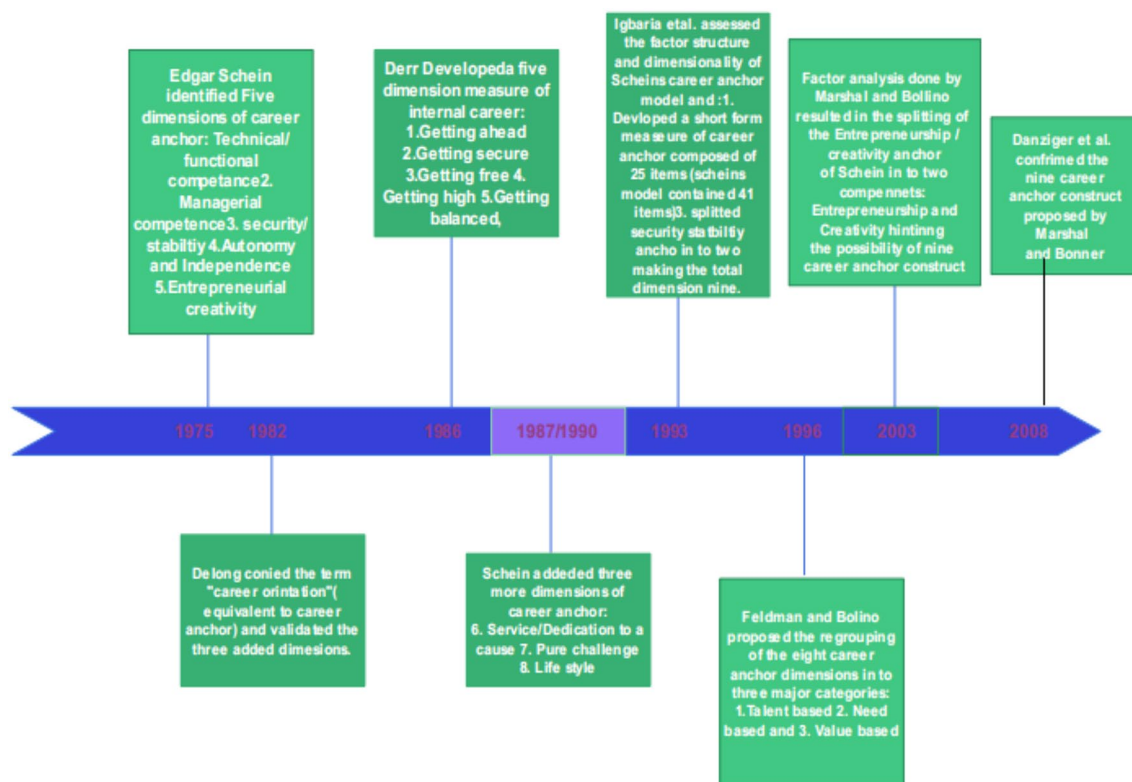


Fig. 1 Time line of major milestone in the conceptualization of career anchor/orientation

have used his original conception as a framework to assess internal career of individuals. However, Schein's original conception of career anchor has failed to show consistency among diverse group of people (age groups, gender, race etc.) [49]. Added to this, his proposition that individual can only have on dominant career anchor has been empirically contested and disproved.

The trend in the growth of career anchor/orientation research in the selected period

The number of publications in each year is shown in Table 3. The first publication of career anchor appeared in 1975 (a seminal book by Edgar Shein). The year 1976 and 1977 saw no publication. In 1978 Schein published another seminal book (which is still widely referred today) in which he further expanded the concept. Only four publications were made between the year 1979 and 1989. Annual publication showed a slight increase in the years 1990 and 1991 which saw publication of seven articles (three and four, respectively). Eight articles were published between 1992 and 1995. A total of four articles were published in the year 1996 making it one of the highest in the 1990's. The trend slightly declined from 1997 to 1999 which witnessed the publication of zero, two and one articles, respectively.

The number of publications kept a momentum between the years 2000 and 2004. A total of seventeen articles got published within the range of five years. The highest number of publications was registered in the year 2001 (three), 2003 (six) and 2004 (five). Then, there appeared a steady decline in the number of publications in the years 2004 to 2008. A total of four articles (one in each year) were published in these years.

A sharp increase was observed in the year between 2009 and 2015. A total of 29 articles saw the light of the day in these years. The largest number of articles for the entire period selected for the review was also registered within these range in the year 2014 (a total of seven articles),

A total of 28 documents were published between 2016 and 2021. The year 2022 saw no publication at all. This might be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic which forced research related activities to come to a halt. A remarkable increase was observed in the year 2023 which witnessed 4 publications up to the month of November.

As can be seen from Fig. 2, the trend in the growth of publication related to career anchor/orientation is not uniform throughout the selected period. The number kept moving back and forth resulting in quite a bumpy trend. On average, two career anchor/orientation-related

Table 3 Trend in publications

Year	Number of publications	Percentage (%)	Year	Number of publications	Percentage (%)
1975	1	1	2001	3	3
1976	0	0	2002	1	1
1977	0	0	2003	6	5
1978	1	1	2004	5	5
1979	0	0	2005	1	1
1980	0	0	2006	1	1
1981	1	1	2007	1	1
1982	1	1	2008	1	1
1983	0	0	2009	2	2
1984	0	0	2010	4	4
1985	0	0	2011	4	4
1986	1	1	2012	2	2
1987	1	1	2013	6	5
1988	1	1	2014	7	6
1989	0	0	2015	4	4
1990	3	3	2016	6	5
1991	4	4	2017	6	5
1992	3	3	2018	4	4
1993	2	2	2019	5	5
1994	0	0	2020	3	3
1995	3	3	2021	4	4
1996	4	4	2022	0	0
1997	0	0	2023	4	4
1998	2	2	2001	3	3
1999	1	1			
2000	2	2			

publications were made per year globally within the review period. The reason for the slow pace of research publication might be attributed to the fact that the majority of previous research focused on empirically investigating the external aspect of career. And this has made career anchor/orientation (internal aspect of career) research to get a very little attention [27]

Geographic distribution of career anchor/orientation research (by country and continent)

As presented in Table 4 of the total hundred and eleven publication considered for the review, ninety-seven (89%) belonged to twenty-five countries, and the remaining twelve related to studies that considered global sample or respondents from more than one country. In 38% of the countries, a minimum of one and a maximum of three publication were made in the selected period.

More than 5 publications each were made in 62% of the countries. The US leads with a whopping thirty-one publication amounting to 28% of the total. The UK follows with ten publications. South Africa is ranked third followed by Canada with eight and seven publications, respectively. The same fact can also be observed from Fig. 3 which shows the geographic distribution of the publication on a map.

When looked from continental perspective (see Table 5), the North American continent leads with a total of thirty-five publication accounting to 39% of the total. This result concurs with Hall et al. [20] thinking that most management (career included) research are North America centric and [45] view that much of what we know about career orientation/career anchor is the result of studies undertaken in the western context. Europe is ranked second with twenty-seven publications (which amounted to 27% of the total). Asia is

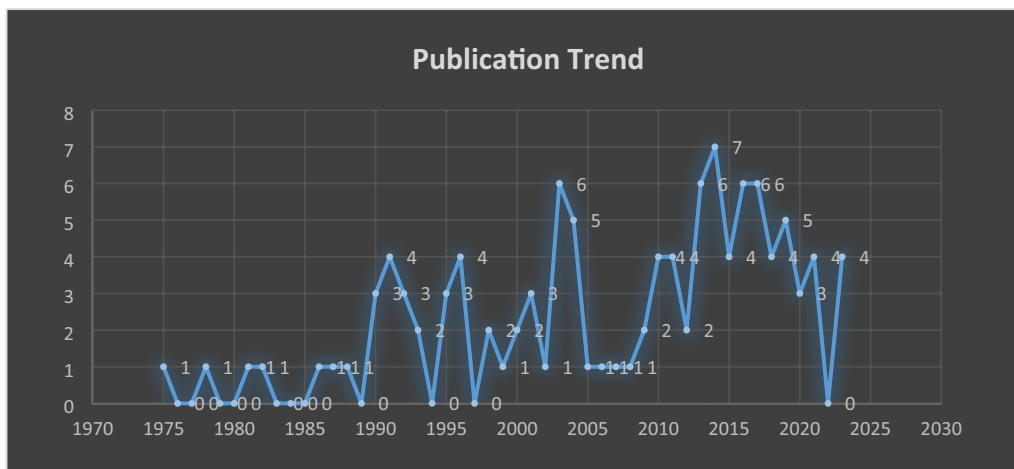


Fig. 2 trend in career anchor/orientation publications

Table 4 Distribution by country

Country	Number	%	Country	Number	%
Australia	2	0.02	Singapore	3	0.03
Brazil	3	0.03	South Africa	8	0.07
Canada	7	0.06	Switzerland	3	0.03
China	2	0.02	Taiwan	1	0.01
Finland	3	0.03	Thailand	1	0.01
France	1	0.01	The Netherlands	1	0.01
India	3	0.03	Taiwan	1	0.01
Iran	3	0.03	Turkey	5	0.05
Israeli	2	0.02	UK	10	0.09
Japan	2	0.02	US	31	0.28
Korea	2	0.02	Multiple countries together	9	0.08
Nigeria	1	0.01	Global	3	0.03
Norway	1	0.01			
Russia	3	0.03			

ranked third with twenty-two publications. Africa (represented by South Africa and Nigeria only) ranked fourth with eight publications. South America and Australia are ranked fifth and sixth contributing four and two publications, respectively.

The number of publications in Africa and South America are skewed in favor of only few countries. Out of the nine publications in the African continent eight publications are made in South Africa and one is from Nigeria. The South America publication entirely relates to Brazil (except one research which draws on sample taken from Peru and Colombia).

Table 5 Distribution of publication across six continents

Continents	Number	Percentage
Asia	23	0.22
Australia	2	0.02
Europe	28	0.27
North America	41	0.39
South America	4	0.04
Africa	9	0.09

Table 6 Nature of the selected article

Nature	Number	%
Research article	85	0.771
Conceptual article	6	0.055
Conference proceeding	7	0.055
Seminal book	3	0.028
Systematic review and integration	3	0.028
Seminal research article	2	0.018
Seminal research article	2	0.018
Doctoral thesis	1	0.009
Book chapter	1	0.009
Personal reflections	1	0.009

Nature and major focus of career anchor/orientation research

The one hundred eleven-publication accessed from various databases belonged to different categories. As can

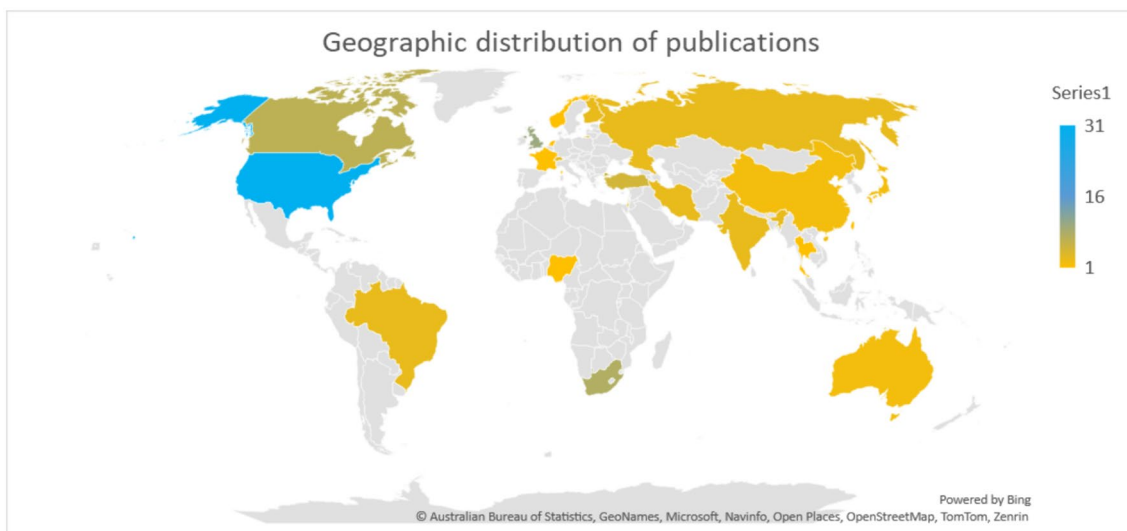


Fig. 3 Distribution of publication by country

be seen in Table 6, the majority (accounting to 77%) are research-based articles. Six articles focused on elucidating the conceptual structure of career anchor/orientation. A total of five articles were conference proceedings. Three publications were seminal books written by authors who originated the concept. Three articles were systematic review and integration of the previous studies related to career anchor/orientations.

Two articles (one by Edgar Schein and the other by Delong, T. J.) were separately categorized as seminal articles, because they contained empirical data pertaining to initial conceptualizations of career anchor/orientations. Two publications are master’s thesis. One publication is a doctoral dissertation written on the subject of career orientation. The last items are one book chapter, a contribution from an influential author, and one personal reflection published in reputable journal.

The majority of the publication (84) focused on developing the distribution of career anchor/orientation dimension among a selected number of respondents.

These group mainly focused on empirically showing the career orientation dimensions profile of selected number of respondents. Fourteen articles are conceptual in nature and focused on the conceptualization of the issue from varied perspectives. Four articles focused on psychometric evaluation and validation of the career anchor instrument originally developed by Edgar Schein. Two articles considered career anchor as mediator and moderator between selected organizational factors. One article purely focused on the reflection of an author regarding how the conceptualization of career anchor by Edgar Schein affected his personal career trajectory.

Keyword and citation analysis

Keyword analysis was made to determine the most recurring concept and themes across the publications. The analysis is only limited to the ninety-seven articles published in a journal. Of the ninety-seven articles, fifteen of them did not contain keyword related record. A total of 253 key words were extracted from the rest of the articles. The extracted keywords were pasted in to a word cloud generator (a free online based software which analyses keywords). The result of the analysis can be seen presented in Table 7 below. Career anchor, career development and career orientation were found to be the most frequently observed keywords (see Fig. 4). Job satisfaction, career satisfaction, career, careers, and turnover intentions were mostly mentioned by empirical literature linking career anchor/orientation with job related outcomes. The other repeatedly occurring keywords were management and service.

A total of 16,794 citation were recognized for the 111 publications in the five decades considered for the review. The citation for each publication was accessed from google scholar. Six publications (two conference

Table 7 Most recurring keywords

Word	Count	Relevance
Career anchor	35	1
Career development	10	0.34
Career orientation	9	0.32
Career satisfaction	6	0.24
Job satisfaction	6	0.24
Career	7	0.24
Careers	4	0.17
Turnover intention	3	0.16
Management	3	0.15
Service	3	0.15



Fig. 4 Graphical portrayal of keyword recurrence

proceeding three journal articles and one master’s thesis) did not get a citation. Seventy-one publications got a citation ranging between 1 and 100. A total of thirty-one publications received a citation between 100 and 494. Three publications received a citation above five hundred. The most influential and impactful publication which got a citation of 5644 is a book by Edgar Schein titled *Career dynamics: matching individual needs and organizational needs*.

The second highest citation (1457) was secured by a seminal article titled *Career Anchors Revisited: Implications for Career Development in the 21st Century* written by the same author. The third highest citation (534) was received by another seminal article: *Career Orientations of MIS Employees: An Empirical Analysis* authored by Igarria et al. The average number of citations is 157 per publication. However, since close to 47% of the citation belong to a single author (Edgar

Schein, who originated the concept), this average figure should be interpreted cautiously.

The major outlets for career anchor/orientation research

Publications included in the review were associated with various outlets. The majority (89%) of them were published in different academic journals (see Table 8 in the last page for complete list of journals). Five of the publications appeared in conference proceeding and the remaining were published in the form of books and book chapters. The majority of the journals only published one article each related to career anchor/orientation in the selected period. *Career Development International* published seven articles, which is the highest number. This is followed by *Journal of European Industrial Training*, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, and *Personnel Review*, which published three articles each. *Drishtikon: A Management Journal*, *Journal of Career Development*, *Journal*

Table 8 List of journals

List of journals		
Advances in Accounting	Review of Public Personnel Administration	Scientia Iranica
Advances in Information Systems	Journal of Career Development	SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND PERSONALITY
AGATHOS	Journal of European Industrial Training	Southern African Business Review
American Journal of Police,	Journal of Counseling Psychology	Sustainability
Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research,	Journal of Family and Economic Issues,	The Academy of Management Executive
Behavioral sciences	Journal of Global Information Management	The British Accounting Review
Cad. EBAPE.BR,	Journal of Human Resource Management	The International Journal of Human Resource Management
Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences	Journal of Management Development	The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science
Career Development International	Journal of Management Information Systems	The Journal of Social Economic Research)
Drishtikon: A Management Journal	Journal of Management Information Systems	Acta Odontologica Scandinavica
Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice	Journal of Managerial Psychology	Information Systems Journal
European Journal of Training and Development	Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology	International Journal of Healthcare Management
European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology	Journal of Organizational Behavior	Hospitality Management
Frontiers in Psychology	Journal of Psychology in Africa	Japan Journal of Nursing Science
Group & Organization Studies	Journal of Vocational Behavior	Journal of Convention & Event Tourism
Human Resource Development Quarterly,	Management International Review	Journal of Vocational Marketing
Human Resource Management Review,	Management Research and Practice	Paradigm
Information & Management	Management Research Review	Performance & Instruction
Information Management	MIS Quarterly	Procedia—Social and Behavioral Sciences
International Journal of Information Systems and Project Management	Organizational dynamics	SA Journal of Human Resource Management
International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science	Personnel	Journal of Career Assessment
International Journal of Training and Development	Personnel review	Journal of Strategic Information Systems
Journal of Management Information’s System	PLOS one	Group & Organization Management
Journal of Occupational Health	Qual Quant	R&D Management
Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations	Review of Business Management	Journal of Management Studies
SA Journal of Human Resource Management/	Revista de Administração Mackenzie	

of Management Information Systems, and Personnel are ranked third publishing two articles each.

The Current state of career anchor/orientation research

There has been an increased emphasis on understanding the factors that influence career choices and career satisfaction. For instance, Akosah-Twumasi et al. [1] conducted a systematic review to identify the various factors that influence youths' career choices. Their study underscores the importance of considering cultural influences on career decisions, thus highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding of career choices among different cultural groups. Moreover, Brown and Lent [5] have made significant progress in the study of domain satisfaction and career self-management models. Their work on Social Cognitive Career Theory at 25 sheds light on the factors that contribute to individuals' satisfaction with their chosen career paths. This demonstrates the evolving nature of career research and the need to incorporate new theoretical frameworks into the study of career anchors. Furthermore, Whiston & Cinamon [48] have emphasized the importance of integrating research findings into career counseling practice. Their work on the work-family interface highlights the need for a holistic approach to understanding the complexities of individuals' career choices in the context of their personal and family lives.

In addition, Autin et al. [3] have conducted a longitudinal study to examine subjective social status, work volition, and career adaptability. Their findings underscore the dynamic nature of career development and the need to consider individuals' subjective perceptions of their social status in relation to their career choices. Guan et al. [18] have also contributed to the understanding of career satisfaction and turnover intention among managers in the Chinese context. Their study on the role of perceived organizational career management and career anchor demonstrates the importance of organizational factors in shaping individuals' career trajectories.

Moreover, Hsieh and Huang [23] have investigated the effects of socioeconomic status and proactive personality on career decision self-efficacy. Their study highlights the need to consider individual personality traits and socioeconomic background in understanding career decision-making processes. This indicates the importance of incorporating personality and socioeconomic factors into the study of career anchors. Overall, the existing state of career anchor research has made significant strides in understanding the multifaceted nature of career choices, satisfaction, and adaptability. However, there are several knowledge gaps that warrant further investigation. Future research should focus on exploring the longitudinal effects of cultural, organizational, and individual

factors on individuals' career anchors. Additionally, there is a need to consider the impact of gender disparities, work-family dynamics, and uncertain labor market conditions on individuals' career choices and satisfaction. By addressing these knowledge gaps, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of career anchors and provide valuable insights for career counseling and organizational management.

Gaps in the existing literature

The concept of career anchors has been extensively studied in the field of organizational behavior and career development. However, despite the abundance of research in this area, there are several gaps that need to be addressed to further our understanding of career anchors and their implications for individuals and organizations. One of the key findings in the literature is the identification of different career anchors that individuals may possess. According to Schein [40], there are eight distinct career anchors, including autonomy/independence, security/stability, technical/functional competence, general managerial competence, entrepreneurial creativity, service/dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle. These career anchors play a significant role in shaping individuals' career choices and decisions [40]. Despite the extensive research on the various career anchors, there is a lack of consensus on the exact number and nature of career anchors.

The study by Crites [9] suggests that there may be additional career anchors beyond the eight identified by Schein [40]. This points to the need for further research to explore and identify potential additional career anchors that may exist. Furthermore, the existing literature on career anchors primarily focuses on their impact on individual career development and decision-making. However, there is a dearth of research on the organizational implications of career anchors. Research by Hall and Schneider [19] indicates that individuals with different career anchors may have varying levels of job satisfaction and engagement, which can ultimately impact organizational performance. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the organizational implications of career anchors and their potential influence on talent management and retention strategies. Another gap in the literature pertains to the intersection of career anchors with other individual and contextual factors. Research by Schein [39] suggests that an individual's career anchor may be influenced by their personal values and beliefs. Additionally, the study by Schein [44] highlights the potential influence of national culture on the prevalence and salience of different career anchors. Thus, future research should aim to investigate the interplay between career anchors, personal values, cultural factors, and other

individual differences to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants and outcomes of career anchors. Moreover, the existing literature predominantly focuses on the career anchors of traditional full-time employees. There is limited research on the career anchors of non-traditional workers, such as freelancers, gig workers, and remote employees. Given the changing nature of work and the increasing prevalence of non-traditional employment arrangements, it is essential to investigate how career anchors manifest and evolve in these alternative work settings.

Research by Nowak & Bonner [34] underscores the overriding influence of “work family balance” in the career decision of individuals. This highlights future research should consider the interplay between work and family dynamics in influencing career decisions and satisfaction. Future research should also explore the longitudinal effects of subjective social status on individuals’ career anchors and the contextual factors that influence career anchors across different cultural and organizational settings.

Conclusion

The current review focused on scientometrically analyzing career anchor/orientation research conducted over the last five decades. The review had the following objectives: mapping the shift in the conceptualization of career anchor/orientation, assessing the trend in the growth of career anchor/orientation research in the selected period, assessing the geographic distribution of career anchor/orientation research, identifying the nature and major focus of career anchor/orientation research, performing keyword and citation analysis and identifying the major outlets for career anchor/orientation research.

Interesting insight emerged from the review. First the mapping of the conceptualization revealed that Edgar Schein’s original conceptualization has remained to be a dominant conceptualization of career anchor/orientation. However, alternative/rival conceptualizations were provided by other authors. More to this some authors have empirically checked the validity and psychometric properties of the career anchor model developed by Schein.

Secondly the trend in the publication of career anchor/orientation research revealed the presence of a bumpy pattern with various ups and downs. Third the geographic distribution of career anchor/orientation research showed that the overwhelming majority of the publication are made in the US, UK, and the Asian Continent. The African continent is only represented by two countries (South Africa and Nigeria).

Fourth the analysis of the major focus of career anchor/orientation research indicates that majority of the

articles assessed the distribution of the various dimension of career anchor/orientation. The rest related career anchor/orientation with diverse group of organizational outcomes. The keyword analysis also revealed a pattern that matches the focus area discussed above. Last but not least the investigation of the outlet of career publication showed that authors published articles/books/proceedings in various journals, conference and book publishing companies.

Limitation and future direction

The current scientometric analysis has not made use of the exhaustive list of databases to search and locate the articles. In this regard, future analysis can expand the list by for example including Scopus and Web of Science databases (to which the current author didn’t have a subscription). The current analysis has also not made use of software’s purposely designed for undertaking scientometric review. Upcoming review may consider software like VOS (Visualizing Scientific Landscape) to perform co-occurrence, bibliographic coupling, and co-authorship analysis.

The rest of the countries in Africa and other parts of the world are yet to publish a single study. The national context, cultural, political and economic factors affect the career orientation of individuals [8, 35, 45] Conceptualizations and empirical studies made in the context of the west may not be generalized to other countries as they are undertaken in a unique institutional and national setting [27]. Due to difference in socio-cultural contexts [26], more studies need to be undertaken in different geographic regions of the globe.

The concept of career anchor is becoming more important in the twenty-first century as its content and structure are changing due to changes in the personal values and organizational policies [36, 37, 43]. Future researchers in this regard can focus on investigating the evolution of and transformation of the content and structure of the concept.

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Availability of data and materials

The datasets (the summary of the bibliometric content of the articles) used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The author declares that there is no competing interests.

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