



Predicting Chinese human resource managers' strategic competence: Roles of identity, career variety, organizational support and career adaptability



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 20 September 2015

Received in revised form 16 November 2015

Accepted 23 November 2015

Available online 24 November 2015

Keywords:

Career construction theory

Career adaptability

Career variety

Professional identification

Strategic competence

ABSTRACT

Based on career construction theory, the predictors of human resource managers' strategic competence in the Chinese context were examined. Results from a survey administered to Chinese HR managers ($N = 220$) showed that professional identification, career variety and organizational support for strategic human resource management positively predicted Chinese human resource managers' strategic competence. In addition, career adaptability served as a significant mediator for the above relations. The results further showed that the effect of professional identification on career adaptability was stronger among employees who perceived a higher (vs. lower) level of organizational support for strategic human resource management. The corresponding moderated mediation model was also supported such that the indirect effect of professional identification on strategic competence was stronger among employees who perceived a higher (vs. lower) level of organizational support for strategic human resource management. These findings carry implications for career construction theory and human resource managers' career development in China.

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1. Introduction

In the last two decades, much attention has been paid to human resource (HR) managers' role in organizations and two contrasting views have emerged (e.g., Roche & Teague, 2012; Wright, 2008). On the one hand, it has been argued that the importance of the HR department is declining as HR managers add limited strategic value to organizational success (Guest & King, 2004). As a result, many HR managers are assigned administration-focused rather than strategy-focused tasks in organizations (Guest & King, 2004; Wright, 2008). Moreover, some researchers doubt whether HR managers possess the competence that would make them credible strategic partners (Caldwell, 2001). On the other hand, it has also been argued that HR managers can help organizations to build sustainable competitive advantages by co-creating and implementing important business strategies (e.g. Brandl & Pohler, 2010; Cascio, 2005; Hayes, 2013; Wright, Dunford, & Snell, 2001; Ulrich, 1997). Ulrich (1997) strongly advocated the strategic role of HR managers in organizations, but indicated that HR managers need to proactively refine and update their competence related to these challenging functions.

Based on their empirical studies among HR managers and general managers across various countries, Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank, and Ulrich (2013) identified six aspects of HR competence that contribute most to the organizational effectiveness: the ability to co-

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