

## The Meaning of Career Success among Job-Hopper in The Boundaryless Career (Phenomenological Research)

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### Abstract

This phenomenology qualitative research was conducted in order to examine the dynamics of career success among job hopper and how did job hoppers interpret the meaning career success in boundaryless career. This research used in-depth interview for collecting the data and supported by the data from the documents. The respondents involved in this research were fours job hoppers in the level of manager, five significant others, such as family, workmate, and a steady career. The findings revealed that: the job-hoppers individuals who frequently movement of job from one place to another place because of intrinsic factors (financial, interpersonal conflict, alternative employment opportunities, etc.), extrinsic factors (challenges, willing to learn, personal characteristics, family, etc.), proponent factors (networking, family support, and media). The meanings of career success among job-hopper in the boundaryless career namely; self-fulfillment (job satisfaction, life satisfaction, meeting personal goals, adding value to others), and work/life balance (family satisfaction and quality time with family). This study showed that being a job-hopper was a tool for pursuing the meaning of career success.

**Keywords:** job-hopper, career success, boundaryless career, qualitative.

### Introduction

Work means an activity as a form of responsibility to self, others, the environment, and nation (Morin, 2004). In psychology, the work refers to human behavior that has a purpose, discipline, and structured in a task and time, requiring physical and mental abilities and it is more a liability than a voluntary act (Corsini, 2002). According to Greenhaus (2003) the further

understanding of the work is contained in the understanding of career.

Furthermore, it is explained that careers are product of time that influenced by the economic, political, and cultural in which they are embedded (Greenhaus, 2003). Recent changes in the global economy and political have had dramatic effects on the way work organizations are structured and on the manner in which they operate (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999). The uncertainty of

political and economic also affects the rising amount of unemployment in Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2010).

Behind the phenomenon of the rising number of unemployment, there is a group of employee that frequent movement of job from one place to another place without any specific reason (Goh, 2012). They are known as job-hopper in this research. Actually, job-hopping phenomenon is closely related with "Hobo syndrome" behavior that introduced by Ghiselli in 1974. He noted that some workers have a natural internal impulse to move from one job to another for irrational reasons (in Bodla & Hameed, 2010).

When it comes to job-hopper, many make the quick assumption that it is all about the money (Goh, 2012; Tett & Meyer, 1993; Hellman, 1997). In fact, some research has found that job-hopping behavior is an individual tool to achieve his vision of life, to meet the two basic needs in the form of self-fulfillment and needs to share (Yuliawan & Himam, 2007).

The discussion of job-hopping phenomenon cannot be separated from the context of organization or firm. Based on data obtained from the Watson Wyatt consulting on human resources, the Global Strategic Rewards survey results in 2007/2008 concluded that companies in Indonesia are facing problems in retaining employees with high achievers (Kian besar jumlah, 2007). According to Ngobeni (2006), Job-hopping phenomenon is a behavior that is detrimental and adverse impact on the ecosystem in the firm. In the group of black workers in

America, the factors influencing them to become job-hopper is the desire to become self-employed or a desire for self-actualization (Ngobeni, 2006).

Many negative effects of job-hopping phenomenon as described previously, but still, the job-hopper can survive and even tend to grow and continue to grow. This phenomenon is also supported by various studies on the development of career success that directly support the pattern of movement to achieve career success. Arthur, et al. (1999) argued that nowadays the growth and development of career is not limited to one firm only. It is known as the boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 2001; Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003). In the boundaryless career, individuals have work opportunities and career development that more directed to the achievement of experiences which are not limited to one firm only. It can be concluded that the job-hopper has a tendency of boundaryless career attitude and mindset. They have the enthusiasm and productivity in the changing of work situation (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; Himam, 2011).

Having knowledge, expertise, and experience from previous work makes job-hopper can be accepted in a variety of firms and is able to increase his price in the job market. Quoted from Pqndt Wavelength (2003), the job-hopper is readily accepted by many companies as a group (brand) new employees who are flexible, so it is possible that this is the cause of a quarter of the number of employees in the U.S. work on some of the company less than one years. The more often they move and supported by the

names of the companies where job-hopper is working, their price of the job-hopper will be increasingly expensive and the achievement of career success is very close to achieved. Based on that understanding, career success is one of the achievements that the job-hoppers want to achieve.

In the organizational traditional career (Eby, et al., 2003; Greenhaus, 2003), career success pointed by status, position, and incomes. Career success is conceptualized as a linear career path in a hierarchical within a single firm: In traditional career, loyalty and tenure are required to achieve career success (Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). It is contradictive with boundaryless career which reflect radical changes in employment relationships and organizational structures, driven by globalization, competitive pressures and rapid technological advances (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005). It indicates that there is a difference in understanding the concept of career success among individuals in traditional career and job-hopper in the boundaryless career.

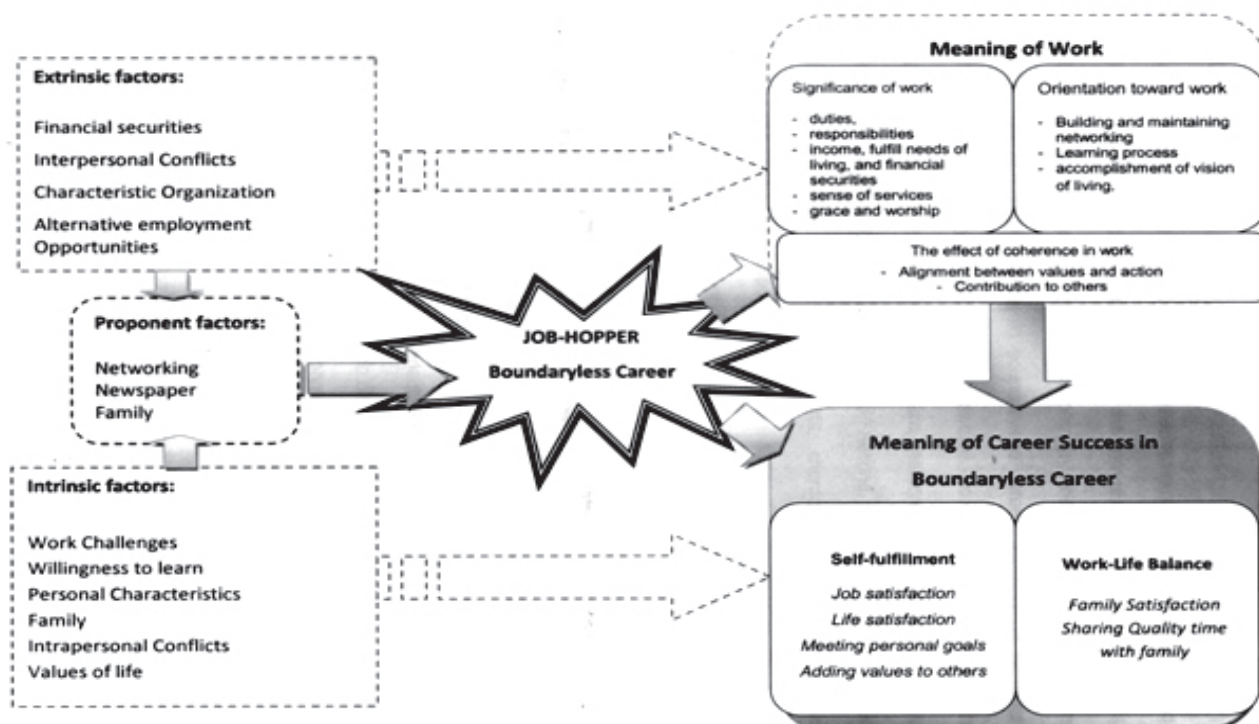
So that this research aims to answer the question, "How did job-hopper interprets the dynamics of career success in the boundaryless career? As the main question is, and also supported by sub-question, "What were the factors that influencing job-hopping behavior? How did job-hopper to understand the meaning of work in the boundaryless career? And What were the factors that influencing career success among job-hopper in the boundaryless career?"

## Method

This research used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research perspective. Participants of this research were four job hoppers in the level of manager up, and five significant others, such as family, workmate, and steady career. Interview was used as the main tools in collecting the data, and supported by data from the documents.

## Result

The Result of analysis data showed that there are nine factors that influencing job-hopping behavior, such as: financial needs, conflicts, work challenges, willingness to learn, opportunities to develop careers, personal characteristics, family, and organization. The job-hopping behavior is also influenced by the support from family, newspaper, and networking. The meaning of work for job-hoppers are, 1) Working as a gift and service to God 2) Working as a form of obligation, responsibility, and service, 3) Work to financial security, 4) Work to get the convenience and flexibility, 5) Working as an alignment between the values and actions, 6) Work to achieve the visions of life, and 7) Work to obtain the networking. The meaning of career success among the job-hopper in boundaryless career is the self-fulfillment self- fulfillment (job satisfaction, life satisfaction, meeting personal goals, adding value to others), and work/life balance (family satisfaction and quality time with family). The results of analysis data are summarized in picture 1.



Picture 1. The dynamics of career success among job-hopper in boundaryless career

## Discussion

Based on the picture. 1 above, the meanings of career success among job-hoppers in boundaryless career are in the term of self-fulfillment and work-life balance. The findings show that status, position, and income are not the main indicators of career success in boundaryless career. Job-hopping behavior happens for so many reasons, it can be divided into: first, intrinsic factors, such as work challenges, willingness to learn, personal characteristics, family, interpersonal conflicts, and values of life. Second, extrinsic factors, such as financial securities, interpersonal conflicts, characteristic organization, and alternative employment opportunities.

As a worker, job-hopper has a different pattern of working behavior with others individual. It is

known as job-hopping behavior which individual frequently movement of job from one place to another place without any specific reason (Judge & Wantanabe, 1992).

Based on the data analysis, in beginning of a career, extrinsic factors became the most dominant factors that influencing job-hoppers move from one place to another place. The lack of financial securities and conflict with supervisor or workmate lead participants into job dissatisfaction and decided to resign from the company. According to Higgins (2001), individual's decision to change career frequently influenced by context or social factors. Extrinsic factors are closely related to their orientation of working (De Klerk, 2005). One of the examples is when the demands of living were increased, they tend to move and find a better income

and financial securities, because their working orientation is to fulfill families' needs.

In the middle of their career, extrinsic factors became the main reason why they decided to move from one place to another place. The extrinsic factors such as work challenges, willingness to learn, desire to have knowledge, experiences, and quality time with family became the intrinsic factors that lead participants to the job-hopping behavior. One of the participants revealed that the desire to change job was not supported by the failure or did not like the job, but the reason were willingness to learn something new and conquering new challenges in work. Another participant mentioned that the need to manage a larger number of employees became the reason to move. Other respondent revealed that he decided to move the work not based on financial factors or a desire for higher compensation, but because of job satisfaction on the achievements that he has done. In addition, the difference in principles or values held by the owner of the company and respondent run well into one of the causes of the respondent decided to move. These findings revealed that intrinsic factors that influencing the job-hopping behaviors are closely related to the meaning of success among job-hopper in boundaryless career (Gunz & Heslin, 2005).

The result of data analysis showed that job-hopper has a boundaryless work function. They moved from one place to other places and has occupied the position from lowest to highest position. According to them, positions could not be used a measure of their career success. This is contradictory with the results of Powell and Mainiero (1992), who explained that the measure

of success was positioned or status of a person in a company or organization. The first meaning of career success for job hopper is self-fulfillment, according to the finding self-fulfillment revealed as the key to a career success, includes job satisfaction, life satisfaction, meeting personal goals, and adding value to others. According to Hoover (2007), self-fulfillment as the key to a successful career included happiness, job satisfaction, meeting their personal dreams with what to do, and confidence.

All of those related to achieving that revealed through the contribution and innovation to organizational success. Achievement also revealed in the term of reputation at work, the way they build and maintain relationship with others inside and outside the organization, the way they build owner or supervisor trust, and also self-development. This finding is supported by Sturges (1999) research which proved that success is determined by the achievement of self that leads to a good reputation. This finding suggests the existence of individual marketability (Bird, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 2001), which described job hopper as a successful individuals who are capable to give and add value to the organization and they are considered to have an important influence on other organizations.

The second meaning of career success is work-life balance. Findings revealed that job-hopper's personal life as a form of meaningful career success. These data are consistent with the findings of Greenhaus, Callanan, and Godshalk (2000) which showed that success is when individual is able to align or balance between

personal life and work. Family happiness is the main focus of the subject in his life. Happiness is manifested in the form of quality time with every member of the family. The meaning of career success for the subject is a balance between work and family. The meaning of balance is when the subject still running the roles and responsibilities as an employee and be able to share time together with as the member of the family. This result support previous findings (Powell & Mainiero, 1992; Yankelovich & Immerwahr, 1984) which revealed that career success is a balance between work and other life outside it. Sturges (1999) classify them into groups of self-realizes, It describes individuals who understand the success of his career as a balance between work-life and their home-life.

Overall career success in boundaryless career was significantly related to subjective career success. Career success is an outcome of a person's career experience. Career success may be defined as the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time.

## **Conclusion**

In general, career success is measured by position, status, and materials value, such as; income. Individuals are required to have a loyalty in carrying out the work, to gain maximum career development within a company or organization where he/she worked. This is different from that understood by the respondents regarding their job and career success.

The respondents are individuals who have uncertainty work patterns, they move jobs from one place to another frequently and only work for a short time within a company or organization. The understanding of career success for the respondents are no longer seen as a status, position, or material value as said before.

The term Self-fulfillment and work-life balance are used to describe the meaning of career success in the boundaryless career for job-hopper through the process of working. Self-fulfillment is the desire to realize the vision and mission in life is beneficial both for the individual as a personal and individual in the social context, while work-life balance related to the balance between work and social life. In this case, the social life refers to togetherness with family. Researchers concluded that the desire to achieve career success for those closely associated with the point of view of understanding the work and the factors that motivated the behavior of job-hopping. In realizing the vision and mission in life, respondents choose to the work in the boundaryless career. Job-hopping behavior is only an instrument chosen by job-hoppers to pursue their vision and mission to achieve a meaningful life.

For individuals, each individual should have a work orientation and a clear career path for the development of his/her career in the future. Job-hopping behavior is only an instrument chosen by job-hoppers to pursue their vision and mission to achieve a meaningful life.

For the companies, job hoppers are actually individuals with good qualities and performance.

Hopefully, the result of this research gives an understanding of the meaning of career success among job hoppers and it can be a reference to maintain and develop their quality through;

The organization should facilitate the individual needs in developing themselves. In other hand, the organization should try to lead individuals to their psychological success through protean career.

The organization should realize that in order to create a good quality individual, it

involves a process of continuous learning, the work challenge, and variety of jobs, and networking.

The organization should provide an access to make a balance between organizational goals and individual career strategies.

For further studies with a similar theme, it would be better to conduct a research about people meaning of work and career success in protean career. In order to obtain the diversity of both boundaryless career and protean career for individuals, especially the job-hopper.

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