

## The Mediation of Perceived External Marketability between Self-Direction and Intention to Quit Among Teachers

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### ABSTRACT

*To study the effect of protean careers orientation on teachers' intention to quit, this study investigated the mediating effect of perceived external marketability between self-direction and intention to quit. The framework of this study was under the spectrum of stimulus-organism-response theory. The sample of 274 private primary school teachers of Karachi, the data was gathered using a questionnaire-based survey method and analysed using SPSS 22 and Smart PLS3.2 with structural equation modelling technique. The self-direction was found widespread among young teachers. We found that highly protean teachers had a higher intention to quit when they perceived higher external marketability. The results complement the current knowledge of protean careers orientation in the Pakistani education sector and provide a clear conceptualisation of perceived external marketability. It is also helpful for policymakers to better understand the subjective reasons such as self-direction and perceived marketability among the teachers, which may affect the career decisions of teachers and may lead to quitting behaviour.*

**Keywords:** Intention to Quit, Perceived External Marketability, Self-Direction, Stimulus Organism Response Theory.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The future is never constant, therefore, due to globalization, there is a swift pace of change in the economies and the revolution in the technology (Ali, Iqbal, Amin and Malik, 2015). The ease in communication has forced the people to undergo several changes in their lifestyle and adapt the transformation in their work-life (Matsuyama, 2019; Park, 2009; Nicholson, 1996). The macro-environmental pressures have put a considerable impact on employees and their work adjustments (Postolache, Nastase, Vasilache and Nastase, 2019; Burke and Ng, 2006). In understanding the employees and their workplace, these transformations have shown a persistent change in peoples' attitude at their workplace (Pervaiz, Ali and Asif, 2019; Weng and McElroy, 2012). With specific to people attitudes, DiRenzo and Greenhaus (2011) confirmed that since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the structural labour market changes influence the individual's attitudes. These employees now seek more control to their career progress and seek satisfaction by themselves rather than by the organization or employers (Weng and McElroy, 2012). Subsequently, Barley and Weickum (2017) also considered that these changes are leading towards more frequent career transitions by employees.

Within the social, economic, and technological developments, the individuals assume the responsibility of their careers on their shoulders and plan a career pathway on their own. The desire of people to do more in a short period has ultimately affected their lifestyles and they wanted it to be genuinely fit with their contented values and their beliefs (Friedman and

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Hochschild, 2016). Moreover, Friedman and Hochschild (2016) explained this situation as a discontent of the career by numerous employees and also argued that they have become more conscious about the identity of their career and control of their lives in general. Therefore, according to Gubler, Arnold and Coombs (2014), individuals have become more self-directed and have increased their mobility in their careers, which opposes the pre-established career notions which are known as “old”, “traditional”, “bureaucratic” or “organizational” career concepts, where the responsibility of individual’s career is on the organization alone and low mobility is characterized (Redondo Palomo, Sparrow and Hernández Lechuga, 2019).

This shift of career mindsets and this particular orientation among individuals regarding their career (where they feel, care and bear the responsibility of their career by own) is known as the self-direction which is an eminent dimension of protean career orientation (Hall, 1996; Hall, 2018; Briscoe *et al.*, 2012). However, presently there are a multitude of models explaining the contemporary career theories but the protean career and boundaryless career concepts are widespread and being practised and acknowledged (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). In literature, the significant overlapping in the career concepts of the protean and boundaryless career is being observed (Zafar, Farooq and Quddoos, 2017; Inkson, K., 2006; Briscoe, Hall and DeMuth, 2006). Though, both the models are equally influential (Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). This study presents the understanding of career orientations of private primary teachers through the lens of their self-direction. Therefore, the study only accommodates one dimension of protean career concept in this research which is self-direction.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Self-Direction**

According to Briscoe, Hall, and Frautschy DeMuth (2006), self-direction refers to an extent to which peoples become independent from external control or influence and assumes their responsibility for their respective careers. They often express feelings of attachment with their workplace yet, internally perceives themselves capable of getting employment in any organization they wish (Hall and Mirvis, 1995). They are more engaged in searching for new jobs and opportunities outside the organization which portrays that in their mind they are intending to leave the organization (De Vos and Soens, 2008; Waters, Briscoe, Hall, & Wang, 2014). Besides, self-directed protean careerists are more likely to be satisfied with both their jobs and their careers (Briscoe, Henagan, Burton and Murphy, 2012). In contrast, those who follow their work values while making their career choices are less likely to reveal these aftermaths (Briscoe and Finkelstein, 2009)

### **2.2 Intention to Quit**

Intention to quit is defined as the probability of an employee to leave his/her current organization soon and intention to quit is a strong predictor of actual turnover behaviour. Researchers have been investigating reasons for employees quitting their job because human resource has become the most important asset of any organizations these days (Karavardar, 2014). According to Karavardar and many others, the success of an organization is reliant on its human resource and is proven to be a vital competitive tool for organization, and if an organization fails to retain its important employees, consequently they face loss. In pursuit of achieving the psychological career success, the literature represents that the self-directed career has natural linkages with the outcome such as the intention to quit and organizational commitment (Hall, 2018; Arnold and Cohen, 2008; Tams and Arthur, 2010). The longitudinal study presented by Supeli and Creed (2016), they found that self-direction was positively related with a decrease in the organizational commitment and the job satisfaction over time and it was leading the employees towards quitting intentions. This study was conducted in the cultural perspective of Malaysian individuals (Supeli

and Creed 2016). In addition to that, another study conducted by Granrose and Baccili (2006) stated that self-direction and weaker organizational commitment in the perspective of psychological contracts were linked with an increased intention to quit among individuals.

### 2.3 Perceived External Marketability

According to Mäkelä, Suutari, Brewster, Dickmann and Tornikoski (2016), the external marketability of an employee can be explained as the perception of an employee that he/she is deemed valuable for the external employer. This study accommodates the mediation of perceived external marketability in this research. Since the individual behaviour is largely dependent on the objective and subjective career success factors (Hall, 2006), this study focus on the concept of perceived external marketability as a mediator to intention-to-quit among private primary teachers. In the context of self-direction, employees have to develop their skills which can improve their employability (Redondo Palomo, Sparrow and Hernández Lechuga, 2019). The term employability refers to the “employ” and their “ability” to get employed in any organization (Bennett, Knight, Divan and Bell, 2019). According to Spurk, Kauffeld, Meinecke and Ebner (2016), employability of an individual can be increased by increasing their external marketability.

According to Eby *et al.* (2003), the people with higher perceived internal marketability tends to believe that they are currently performing good in the current job, and once an employee have this essence of psychological success they try their hard to maintain their current job, however it worked opposite with employees with higher perceived external marketability as they when they become confident that their work is worth it and they contributes in the labour market, so in response, they did not maintain their current employment. Therefore, self-direction seems to clear the road towards to achieve their psychological success in terms of their current organization values their skills and performance and also when they think they can have a better role or performance in other organizations. In both situations, the employees are ready to fly to achieve their internal happiness driven by self-directedness which often leads to transition (Hall *et al.*, 2018).

Theoretically, prior researchers have established a link of individuals’ self-direction and intention to quit to achieve their psychological success (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote and Staffelbach, 2009). Thus, this has explained that individuals with an independent career mind-set have been more towards seeking to control their life, progress, and career development in that career pathway. According to Hall (1996), individuals with self-direction are found to have attributes engraved in them such as they own the responsibility for their career, they are autonomous, value continuous learning set their own goals for success and lastly, focused on their growth in sense of career.

Considering the contemporary career mindsets of employees in the current labour market, a focus of point should be narrowed down to any particular sector, on which these concepts can be further discussed which can provide a detailed application of these constructs. The education sector worldwide is usually divided based on class, cost, income, wealth, curricula, geography, medium of instruction, and gender (UNESCO, 2018). These differences manifest themselves in differentials such as access, dropouts and in the quality of education that is being imparted.

There are important reasons for choosing this sector. In Pakistan education system, the private sector facilitates more than 12 million students (UNESCO, 2018). Worldwide, the government education sector usually covers the highest ratios of students but in the education system of Pakistan, the private sector covers 31% of the sector (Redondo Palomo, Sparrow and Hernández Lechuga, 2019). Over the past few years, data has shown that private provision of education has become a significant phenomenon in Pakistan both in urban as well as rural areas and there has been a shortfall of teachers in that region (Andrabi, Das and Khwaja, 2006). Therefore, the study is narrowed down to the private primary education sector of Karachi, Pakistan.

### 3. THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS

According to Hall (1976), protean careerist set their values and choices conferring to their mindsets and the environment they are put into, which affects their career pathway positively or even negatively depending on their earlier choices. Individuals pursuing a protean career emphasizes a meaningful career path expressed by human potential (Hall and Chandler, 2005). Motivation received by individuals from their working environment or their organizations increases the protean attitude among employees and also reduces their stress level and subsequently, their performance in their workplace (Turley and Milliman, 2000).

In the stimulus organism response model, stimulus or the environment performs the role of an independent variable, whereas the organism or the primary emotional response of an individual which includes the perception, is used as mediator and response which is directed by stimulus and perception is set to be the dependent variable (Turley and Milliman, 2000; Brandão and Vieira, 2013; Yoo *et al.*, 1998). In the previous researches, the stimulus particularly refers to the design of physical environment externally that are set for the employees to enhance the performance (Kim and Moon, 2009; Lin, 2004), and this environment is also imitated surroundings created by employees according to their respective values and choices (Kim and Moon, 2009). The atmosphere is the stimulus that influences the evaluation of the individuals and their respective response (Turley and Milliman, 2000). Though, Brandão and Vieira (2013) claimed that numerous findings related to stimuli are not properly enough for providing a descriptive understanding of which of atmosphere and how it directly affects the response of individuals.

According to literature, organism refers to the intervening process of the individuals which includes perception, cognition activities and physiological perspectives (Kumar & Kim, 2014). Previous literature provides that various researchers have neglected the role of “organism” on the relationship of stimulus and response (Daunt and Harris, 2012), whereas Lingard and Lin (2004) argued that individuals are not capable to provide the direct response to the stimulus, without the mediation with the organism. Therefore, the individuals have to go through the proper process of S-O-R which starts from the cognitive to affective behaviour and then vice versa, which properly helps individuals to complete the three-stages procedure.

According to Lam (2011), the organism is divided into the stages of cognition and affective satisfaction, however, Kim and Moon (2009) have divided organism into emotional and perceived activities of an individual at the workplace. Therefore, it can be assumed that individuals’ internal and external perception about their self-value and marketability are organismic process within individuals’ cognition, which is based on their prior choices and direction of their career pathway.

The essence of designing this model of S-O-R is that it directly helps in influencing via stimulus and organism to the response. Fiore and Kim (2007) explained that response as the result of the organism, expressed as intentions, choice approach or avoidance behaviours, and the ultimate decision. Siu, Zhang, Dong and Siu (2013) also measured the responses of individuals from a cognitive perspective. Supporting this, Hall (2018) suggested that response should include reactions in the perspectives of behaviour and cognition. Therefore, this can also be assumed by literature that PCO can manipulate the response of teacher’s intention to quit with the mediation of perceived internal and external marketability since the intention is the foremost antecedent of behaviour (Amin, 2013).

This S-O-R framework was designed long years ago to help researchers understand consumer behaviour (Turley and Milliman, 2000) and the S-O-R model has been lengthily adopted for understanding behaviour and experiences of individuals but is seldom adopted for understanding the behaviours or responses in the field of education and the context of careers (Mäkelä, Suutari,

Brewster, Dickmann and Tornikoski, 2016). Though this model is based on behavioural psychological concepts of stimulus, organism, and response.

In response to that, this study leans towards a richer theoretical understanding of what contributes to career experiences of employees and their adaptation and growth-inducing job, and how the mediation can manipulate the responses of employees' intention towards leaving or staying in the current organization. The extensive research on protean career orientation has not been empirically tested with the behavioural response and on external responses that originate the real intention in the first place. However, self-direction in context with psychological success have been studied extensively (De Vos and Soens 2008; Seibert and Kraimer 2001; Herrmann, Hirschi and Baruch, 2015). This reflection helps the protean careerist in learning new experiences, and to adjust to better working conditions. This self-directedness leads individuals towards the perception of higher or lower marketability externally. Since Cornelius Johannes Neil (2012) has found the positive relationship between self-directed protean career orientation and internal and external perceived marketability, therefore, it is hypothesized that:

*H1: There is a positive relationship between self-direction and perceived external marketability*

As discussed above, individuals with higher self-direction value their personal growth and freedom. According to Hall (2018), individuals with higher self-direction also quick in adapting the changing in the market and they reshape themselves accordingly. In the perspective of young teachers, they are independent of moving from one school to another and can experience various job duties via breaking the traditional workplace mindsets of careers. They keep their emotions, friendships and relationships outside their career space and focus on their own decisions (Cabrera, 2007). To maintain the job search outside the organization and to keep an eye on the external market opportunities often leads employees to opt those employments. Since an individual perceived of higher the perceived external marketability, they always have in mind to leave the current organization and if in case of any uncertainty. According to Briscoe *et al.* (2006), protean careerists will ultimately act more responsive to the information taken from searches engines of jobs which increases the employee's intention to quit the current employment. Therefore, it is stated in the hypothesis that:

*H2: There is a positive relationship between perceived external marketability and intention to quit.*

By large, people accept as true if individuals become dissatisfied from their job, so they immediately start finding alternatives, considering the other job-related options and then decide whether to quit the job or not (Chan and Mai, 2015). As today's careers are increasingly becoming haphazard and discontinuous (Pervaiz, Ali and Asif, 2019; Sullivan and Arthur 2006). However, there are still people in traditional mindsets about their career, they are close enough to the other contemporary models tend to have lesser career success. In this mindset of self-directedness of individuals, they do take responsibility for their failures and success in career.

For instance, it is through being self-directedness that individuals who learn skills are not targeted on the firm or workplace they are in. For example, the training and diplomas they take, they ultimately benefit themselves, rather the organisation particularly. Similarly, perceived external marketability calls for goals required not in accordance to the age of the professional, but according to the how capable they are, the skills they know and how independent they are (Volmer and Spurk, 2011) and more toward their confidence at their skills and capabilities to manage in the labour market.

An employee's commitment towards their organization has been affected by the advent of the protean career orientation, where organizations, due to their limited resources, cannot assure lifetime employment (Hall *et al.*, 2018). The concept of life-time employment has thus faded, and it is time to look beyond the job and to develop the career (Hall, 2002; Barbara and Wolfgang,

2010). But in response to that, Individuals should be on constant alert to the changes taking place around them. The role of the firm is thus reduced to that of a tool for providing employees with all the necessary resources to manage their projects. Employees in such a scenario become mere change agents and focus on themselves.

Theoretically, concerning the above discussion, Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, and Staffelbach, (2009) build a relationship between self-direction and intention to quit among employees to achieve their psychological success. As mentioned earlier, self-direction is characterised by the exercise in the pursuit of psychological success (Ali, Othman, & Ahmad, 2017). However, there has been no or less empirical evidence found on the relationship between perceived marketability and intention to quit but enough pieces of evidence are showing that conceptually increased perceived external marketability leads towards employees' intentions to looking for other opportunities and to grow. Meanwhile, as being protean careerists, the role of self-directedness exists in the current organization of an employee so consequently, he or she will be opting for quitting their job. Therefore, the following hypotheses are formed as:

*H3: Perceived external marketability mediates role between self-direction and intention to quit*

## **4. METHODS**

### **4.1 Procedures and Participants**

In this study, the questionnaire-survey method was used, and target respondents were private primary teachers from Karachi, Pakistan, including its six sub-divisions such as Central Karachi, East Karachi, West Karachi, South Karachi, Malir Karachi and Korangi Karachi. The respondents were divided based on the availability of schools in each division and also based on convenience to get the most of respondents and the response rate of the data collection was 88.2%.

The participants selected for this study were private primary school teachers in Karachi Pakistan, with no less than 1 year of the job. Participants not meeting the criteria were excluded while screening the responses. After the final screening, a total of 274 participants' responses were considered suitable for this study. The age group of the participants were in the range of 25-50, including 172 males and 102 females selected through convenience sampling. The marital status of these individuals was single, married and divorced/widowed. All of them already completed their bachelor's degree or more.

### **4.2 Measurement**

Generally, all the items for variables measurement for the current study were adapted from established measurement items from the previous researcher. For the researchers to come out with their measurement, they have to follow the procedures inclusive of reliability and validity procedures to ensure the items developed to suit their research themes and purposes. For the current research purposes, the items were modified to suit the objectives of the research and research setting. Following sub-sections explains the measurement items for all the studied variables.

#### **4.2.1 Self-Direction**

Protean Career Orientation measure was used which is operationalized by self-direction (item 1-8). These items for this study using a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This is the only one scale till now, widely used and have the higher Cronbach's alpha value, as Self-direction:  $\alpha=0.764$ , and this study found the Cronbach's alpha value as 0.873

#### 4.2.2 Perceived External Marketability

Perceive external marketability measure consisted of a total of 3 items. The German version of scale designed by Eby, Butts, and Lockwood (2003) was used for this study. They demonstrated the measures' construct validity as 0.92 Cronbach's alpha, whereas for this study the value was found 0.802. For this subscale, in comparison with the English version, Cronbach's yield similar values, thus demonstrating the subscales' internal consistency.

#### 4.2.3 Intention to Quit

Intention to quit measure consists of 5 items. This measure was adapted from a previously established scale by Wayne Shore and Liden (1997). The five items were evaluated on five points Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" and yields a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 and for this study, the value was found 0.872. The fifth item used in this construct is a negatively worded item that is reverse coded.

### 5. ANALYSIS

In this study, the analysis was conducted using SPSS 22 and Smart PLS 3.2. SPSS was used to check the reliability and validity of the distributed questionnaires data, to conduct preliminary testing of the research hypothesis and the demographic profile of the respondents, whereas for the measurement model and structural model the SmartPLS 3.2 was employed. This method delivers latent variable score thus avoiding the problem of small sample size and efficiently handling complex models with many variables (Henseler *et al.*, 2009).

#### 5.1 Measurement Model Analysis

The results of the measurement model for the proposed research framework are summarized in Figure 1. The model consists of 22 items that were divided into 8 items for self-direction, 3 items of the perceived external marketability, 5 items for intention to quit, and lastly 6 items from demographics. No items were deleted from this questionnaire. Results of the model are illustrated in Figure 1.

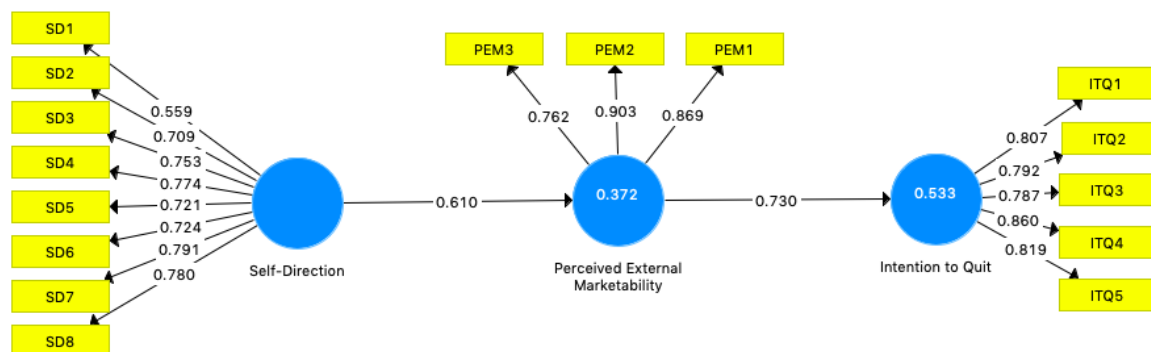


Figure 1. SmartPLS Algorithm Value of the Measurement Model.

For determining the goodness of measure, two of the significant tests were conducted: the reliability and validity test. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), reliability is a test of measuring the consistency of the instruments while validity is a test that indicates the wellness of the developed instrument in measuring a particular concept of the study which are summarized in Table 1 in the next page.

**Table 1** Measurement Model Analysis Result

Construct	Items	Cross Loadings (>0.50)	AVE (>0.50)	Cronbach Alpha (0.60-0.9-)	Composite Reliability (0.60-0.90)	HTMT	VIF (<5.00)
Self-Direction	8	0.560-0.791	0.533	0.873	0.900	Yes	1.00
Perceived External Marketability	3	0.762-0.903	0.717	0.802	0.883	Yes	1.00
Intention to Quit	5	0.787-0.86	0.662	0.872	0.907	Yes	- (DV)

\*AVE: Average Variance Extracted; HTMT: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio; VIF: Collinearity Statistic

## 5.2 Reliability and Validity

For this study, the reliability of the measurement model was obtained by two values which is Cronbach's alpha coefficient (greater than 0.6 value) and composite reliability (value 0.7 or greater) (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Considering the parameters for composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha value, Table 1 shows that the composite reliability from 0.883-0.907 for Cronbach's alpha value and range of 0.802-0.873 for composite reliability. All the values were acceptable in terms of their consistency measure the instruments. Moreover, the validity test was done to measure the theories fitness of the designed test with the suggestions of Sekaran and Bougie (2013) as it requires convergent validity and discriminant validity test. Furthermore, Table 1 shows that all the construct's factor loading is more than the criterion value of 0.5 (Hair et. al, 2014). The collinearity issue of the questionnaire survey was conducted. To deal with the questionnaire's collinearity issue, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test was conducted and all values lesser than 5 as shown in Table 1, which indicates the "Non-Collinearity issue".

In the last step of the analysis, the status of model discriminant validity by PLS-SEM was conducted. Table 2 shows the value of HTMT of the entire constructs are less than 0.90, which indicates minimal discriminant validity for the model following the criteria of Henseler et. al (2015).

**Table 2** Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio HTMT

	Intention to Quit	Perceived External Marketability	Self-Direction
Intention to Quit	0.814		
Perceived External Marketability	0.73	0.847	
Self-Direction	0.679	0.61	0.73

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Henceforth, after a detailed literature review, it can be assumed that the older concept of work has been dramatically shifted from the days of organizational career to when the employees are the sole in-charge of the organization (Briscoe and Finkelstein, 2009). Since the organizations are more towards downsizing, restructuring, and outsourcing, there is a huge emphasis by employees on the short-term contracts between employee and employer rather a long-run psychological contract. These changes in the economy overall has transformed the career process. Previously, employment was marked by steady upward movements and loyalty shown towards the employer



but nowadays, there is no guarantee of being employed with one organization for a lifetime. Thus, employees try to self-manage their careers by making themselves employable in the labour market (De Vos *et al.*, 2016)

It can be suggested to employees with higher self-direction for maintaining social contacts because they might help garner information about job opportunities in the organizations and outside the organizations (Stauffer, S. D., Abessolo, Zecca, and Rossier, 2019). Particularly these connections should include their respective organizations and labour market, for instance, if in the education sector so one should maintain their connections with other teachers so that they may easily be updated about opportunities. According to Eby, Butts and Lockwood (2003), the social network of employees has a greater influence on the critical success factor in the protean career. As the employee usually use social networks for gathering information of their career-relevant and not the information beneficial for the organization or a piece of employer-relevant information (Osburg, Yoganathan, Bartikowski, Liu and Strack, M, 2018; DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994).

These actions can have a higher effect on their mindsets about their current jobs and higher/lower intention to quit their jobs in schools. This same conception is following the S-O-R theory which assumes that the stimulus (self-directedness an independent variable) impacts and causes changes on teachers' perception (perceived external marketability as a mediator) as an organismic state, which ultimately in return cause approach or avoidance response (intention to quit as an independent variable) by the school teachers (Mehrabian and Russel, 1974).

In this study, the above-mentioned concept was proposed in the form of research framework and hypotheses were tested with PLS path modelling using Smart-PLS 3.2 software. All of the hypotheses were statistically and theoretically supported, which reveals that the higher the self-direction among school teachers, the perceived marketability mediates the relationship among self-direction and intention to quit. In short, the current study has provided the greater conceptual, theoretical, and managerial contribution to the education sector and corporate sector too. Specifically, the research has provided detailed information about the private primary education sector of Karachi, Pakistan.

Due to the time constrain and the various few reasons, this study only focused on the self-direction but not intrinsic work values. Moreover, there is a huge research gap in the field of teachers' mindsets about careers, especially in Pakistan. This study recommends future researchers to investigate the effects of intrinsic work values which is the second dimension of protean career orientation with the various other outcomes.

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