

# **Career Anchors of Shopfloor Apparel Workers**



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## Abstract

Given the strong emphasis on human capital, in this exploratory study, the researcher adopted an empirical approach to determine the career anchors of shopfloor apparel workers, the degree of congruency between work, career anchors and retention, with a view to finding ways to retain employees in the apparel industry. **As theorized by Schein (1974) every person should have only one career anchor and that reflects the aspect of one's career that the person would not give up in the face of career choice.** There are eight career anchors namely; security/stability, lifestyle, technical competence, service/dedication, entrepreneurial creativity, general managerial competence, autonomy/independence and pure challenge; nurturing and developing of which would help hold back workers from moving from organizations.

A sample of 355 respondents of OAL participated in this study which was aimed at finding answers to research questions related to career anchors. These shopfloor workers of different categories, as limited by the scope of the study, were administered a questionnaire comprising modified Schein's "Career Anchor Inventory", the "Job Descriptive Index" and demographic data. It was hypothesized that 'the greater the effect of each career anchor the greater will be the retention (of workers)'. Having collected the data, statistical techniques were employed to analyze and present the data. Central finding of the study was that, the security/stability anchor correlated positively with retention, leading across all boundaries in the organization, while technical competence and service/dedication, were also among the most prevalent career anchors of shopfloor workers. In contrast to prior expectations, the hypothesis "that apparel workers possess lifestyle anchor" was not supported.

Findings of this study support the proposition that the apparel workers possess a wide variety of career anchors, but did not adopt a single career anchor, as Schein (1974) claimed,

but incline towards a career profile. About 55 per cent of the sample had three dominant anchors. As expected among apparel workers, they should be lifestyle and security oriented in their careers but it was noted that these anchors are not their only focus for career decisions. The least preferred career anchor across all boundaries and categories is the general managerial career anchor among the apparel workers.

The question "I would rather leave the organization than to...." which is the most relevant test for anchors, indicated shopfloor workers' need for security/stability, autonomy/independence and lifestyle in contrast to the study as a whole. Additionally, a new anchor "affiliation" was identified among workers whose plant excelled in team work which requires further research for confirmation of this anchor.

For managers, the idea of career anchors provides a practical means of career guidance to achieve a better match between the individual's career orientation and job. Though the theory and concept of Schien remain applicable, his questionnaire, the basis of this study found to be a cause of limitation due to problems inherent to lower level employees. Organizational programmes across all boundaries to retain workers need to be revised based on the anchors identified while adopting compensation and reward schemes that value employee anchors.