

What is the role of mindsets and emotion regulation in (un)successfully managing career inaction?

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Career inaction is a phenomenon that describes when and how people fail to realize a desired change (Verbruggen & De Vos, 2019). Not realizing a desire for change can have a negative impact on the sustainability of careers. For example, staying in an organization despite having the intention to leave, negatively affects career satisfaction (Verbruggen & van Emmerik, 2018). One theoretical perspective to understand sustainable careers is the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (De Vos, Van der Heijden, & Akkermans, 2020; Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018). In this paper, we explore two main principles of the COR theory (i.e. the primacy of loss principle and the resource investment principle) (Hobfoll et al., 2018) and apply them to career inaction. The first principle states that ‘resource loss is disproportionately more salient than resource gain’ (Hobfoll et al., 2018, p. 106). Similarly, Verbruggen & De Vos (2019) argue that people fail to realize their desire for change because they are confronted with short-term losses which may influence them more than the benefits on the long term. In this way, the attempt to conserve resources becomes an obstacle to realize the desired change. Interviews with individuals that experience occupational regret confirmed that short-term costs prevent them from taking action (Budjanovcanin & Woodrow, 2020). In addition, the experience of negative emotions such as fear and anxiety when thinking about change is a second inertia-enhancing mechanism (Verbruggen & De Vos, 2019). Moreover, emotions make people even more averse to losses (Cheng & He, 2017; Charpentier, De Martino, Sim, Sharot, & Roiser, 2016). These emotions are likely to be present because career decision-making has major financial and psychological implications and therefore is stressful (Gati & Tal, 2008). According to the second principle of COR theory, in response to stress or resource loss, people must invest in resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In this paper, we want to examine the influence of mindsets, which can be

seen as a personal resource (Keating & Heslin, 2015) on career inaction. When people believe that emotions cannot be controlled, they are more likely to use avoidance-based emotional regulation (De Castella, Platow, Tamir, & Gross, 2018). This avoidance behavior may lead to career inaction over time (Verbruggen & De Vos, 2019). On the other hand, people who believe they can control their emotions, more often use cognitive reappraisal (Tamir, John, Srivastava, & Gross, 2007). Moreover, reappraisal is also an effective strategy to reduce loss aversion (Sokol-Hessner, Camerer, & Phelps, 2013). We argue that people who believe they can control their emotions, will use more effective emotion regulation strategies and therefore will be more successful in realizing their desire for change. To address the above research question, semi-structured interviews with employees who have a desire for career change or fail to act on this desire will be conducted. Since this population has low visibility, participants will be recruited using snowball sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). The theoretical model and the results of the interviews will be presented during the meeting.

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