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Employability Market Orientation in Iran

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Introduction

In the recent evolution of the global economic structure and an uncertain market environment, organizations are looking for ways to gain a competitive advantage to survive. To overcome variable environmental conditions, managers should change their organizations' management patterns and create new principles where time frames for strategic decisions are shorter (Beltrán- Martín & Roca-Puig, 2013). Applying these strategies led to significant changes in modern organizations in careers, more flexible employment, and more employable labour markets (Doorne-Huiskes, Peper, & Dulk, 2005). Therefore, organizations have moved on from traditional human resource management (HRM) procedures and implement flexible human resource management (FHRM). The flexibility of human resource management is a powerful strategy supporting organizations to cope with the unpredictable and competitive environment. Flexibility in human resource management helps organizations overcome market demand uncertainty, succeed in competitive advantage, and preserve business sustainability (Sabuhari et al., 2020).

However, implementing FHRM in organizations has some consequences for employees. FHRM uses strategies that may cause downsizing or 'planned elimination of positions or jobs' (Cascio 1993, p. 95) and its effect on employer-employee relations that have moved towards a new transactional psychological contract. Previous research displays that employees' career life has changed, and the average employed time for one employer is becoming shorter, so the employee in this situation feels a sense of job insecurity and anxiety about professional development (Pawłowska, 2019). Continuing employees in this downsizing situation need to pick up new and more complex abilities to empower them to engage with changing jobs or unemployment. Therefore, employees need to adapt to new career changes.

Scholars introduced employability as a proactive adaptation strategy in the changeable, uncertain, and competitive modern economic structural environment (Heppner et al., 1994; Fugate & Ashforth, 2003; Heijde & Van Der Heijden, 2006; Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; Xia et al., 2020). As we pass a traditional career phase, where employees are loyal to one or a few companies throughout the whole work-life, employability is offered as an alternative (Bernstrøm, Drange & Mamelund, 2019). In the current labour market, an employee prefers to consider employment security and remain in employment on the job market instead of securing their current jobs in the current company. (Bernstrøm, Drange & Mamelund, 2019).

According to Forrier and Sels, "lifetime employability is often put forward as an alternative to lifetime employment with the same employer" (Forrier & Sels, 2003, p.641). Prior researchers have suggested several models in employability skills, even though they have not been tested in different economics and cultures (Law & Watts, 1977; Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Bennett, Dunne & Carré (1999); Dacre Pool, Sewell, 2007). Employability market orientation (EMO) is a behaviour model in employability

competencies presented by Pawłowska (2017) in Poland adapted to the flexibility of human resource management and short-term contracts.

Since Iranian organizations have to move towards flexible human resource management to survive in today's competitive environment, it is required to present a comprehensive model in employability competencies of employees that adapt to the flexibility of human resource management and short-term contracts. But can employability market orientation (EMO) improve employability, and decrease the sense of job insecurity of the employees in Iran regardless of geographical boundaries, cultural and economic differences? The current study directly addresses this question. Furthermore, in this research, the relationship of individual and organizational determinants with EMO will be investigated. As mentioned in the research gap section, prior academic research did not consider the effect of organizational factors on individual elements in relation to EMO. In this study, these factors are considered.

Therefore, this study aims to follow and replicate the Polish research on employability market orientation (EMO) in different economic contexts and cultures. Retest this theory under different cultures and economic conditions gives more validity to the theory. This research is expanded by new variables with the justification of cultural and economic differences in flexibility of human resource management in Iran. The results of this research show that how Iranian workers adapt to the change in the relationship between the employee and the employer, i.e., what employee EMO level is, and what EMO depends on in Iran. Furthermore, the demographic, individual, and organizational determinants that improve the EMO level in Iranian workers are identified. Finally, this research carries out comparative analysis of Iranian and Polish study results.

For answering the questions, 340 questionnaires were distributed between employees in the Iranian public and private sectors to take into account the differences in the psychological relational and transactional contract in the Iranian organizations.

This study's conceptual framework is laid by Pawłowska model on employability market orientation (EMO) in Poland. EMO is a behaviour model that improves employee's employability competencies to predict and cope with uncertainty in the workplace. It shapes the employability and marketability of the employee to be a micro-entrepreneur in the labour market. It consists of skills related to Career Exploration (CE), Vocational Self-Concept Crystallisation (VSCC), Career Planning (CP), Career Strategy Implementation (CSI), and Future Time Perspective (FTP) (Pawłowska, 2019). These skills help an employee to do the appropriate reaction in the flexible human resource management and change in the psychological contract. In the current study, it is argued whether the EMO model helps Iranian employees to improve employability and feel less job insecurity or not.

Two adaptation theories and attribution style theory are taken into account and used as a theoretical framework for individual determinants in this study.

-Cognitive flexibility (CF) mentioned the changing ability in the cognitive processing strategies to face new and unanticipated conditions environment (Cañas, Quesada, Antolí, and Fajardo, 2003; Mehri & Bakhtiarpoor, 2016).

-Career adapt-ability theory (the individual's reactions to errands and challenges of professional development (Savickas, 1997; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Johnston, 2013).

-Attribution style's theory (how people make causal judgments in social interaction (Aquino, Douglas & Martinko, 2004).

-Hofstede's theory of cultural difference is used as an additional theoretical framework.

Prior study in Poland mentioned the model, which improves employees' employability capabilities to predict and cope with uncertainty in the Polish workplace. It seems that EMO also helps Iranian employees in public and private organizations to improve employability and cope with job insecurity. Furthermore, previous academic literature suggested the individual determinants on EMO and mentioned the relationship between adaptability indicators such as cognitive flexibility and career adapt ability, which influences EMO.

These suggestions are the basis for the research hypotheses of this study. Figure1 shows the research problem and the roll of EMO to solve it.

To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first theoretical and empirical research investigating how the EMO acts in Iran. From a theoretical perspective, it allows a deeper understanding of the employability behaviour model and the influences of an individual and organizational factor on improving EMO in the employees that their organizations move towards implementing flexible human resource management. Even though EMO research continues to grow, the practice is still ahead of the theory because it has a dynamic nature. Studies on EMO signify an important development for the field of human resource management and can have a significant impact on the future course of an individual's employability.

From a practical perspective, this study sought to help both employees and employers gain more insight regarding employability market orientation in Iran. The employee adaptive behaviour approach of flexible human resource management is very beneficial due to the effective use of employee competencies in the labour market. Employee adaptive behaviour consists of building employability in this situation. This means that an employee may find employment at another company when they lose their job. According to Giddens (2004) and Pawłowska (2017), the global economy and request for flexible employees will result in an increasing number of "employees with the portfolio" (Pawłowska, 2017), people with an ability of skills and good recommendations from previous jobs, which they can use in their career life, performing several occupations and working in many organizations. The appearance of a portfolio career causes more flexible staffing options (Pate, Scullion, 2016). According to Pawłowska (2019), there are a number of various alternative aspects of work in which

the employee can apply, such as a form of employment, way of work performance (i.e., remote job, crowd employment), duration of corporation between employee-employer (i.e., project work), and rules of cooperation (i.e., employee sharing, work on-demand via apps). Information from this study can help employers and employees understand the importance of employability skill development in the professional career and prevent occupational disorders in the workplace. Last but not least, at the macro level, nowadays, the whole world engaged in the Coronavirus pandemic, which affects everybody's career life and the EMO model helps the economy to support policymakers, employers, and employees to initiate effective policies, strategies, and methods turns threats into opportunities and avoiding the unfavourable phenomenon of unemployment.

This summary organized as follows. In the first section the main research goals, research gap and the research questions are expressed. These research questions are based on a comprehensive review of prior studies. They lead to the development of research hypotheses presented in the second section. The third section expresses the two conceptual models that illustrate the analyzed relationships. In this section, research variables and a description of the study participants are presented. Section four describes the research method inclusive analysis and explains why it is concerned as the most appropriate for the research problem. The last section devoted to the obtained results

Finally, the conclusions of this study, research suggestions and directions for future research, and limitations of the research are presented.

Section 1

1-1 The main research goals of this study are to investigate:

1. How Iranian employees adapt to the flexibility of human resource management and changes in the relationship between the employee and the employer, based on EMO model and what employees' EMO depends on.
2. Identifying the factors that influence Iranian workers' EMO levels (demographic, individual, and organizational factors).
3. Comparison of Iranian and Polish research results.
4. Presentation of the results with additional variables not included in the Polish study (Flexible human resource management as organizational determinants and Attribution style as an individual one.

1-2 The main research goal requires specific questions to be answered:

- 1- Do employees, who exhibit EMO have better rates of employability?
- 2- Do employees who exhibit EMO feel a low level of job insecurity?
- 3- Do employees who exhibit EMO have special socio-demographic and employment related characteristics: Age/Gender /Education/ Marital Status /Type of contract /Work

experience/Management position / the number of jobs to now/Employment time in current job/planning for working in the current job)?

4- Do employees with EMO have individual psychological features?

4-1 Do employees with EMO have special cognitive flexibility level?

4-2 Do employees with EMO have a special attribution style?

4-2-1 which dimensions of attribution style (locus of control, stability and controllability) have relationship with EMO?

4-3 Do employees with EMO have a special Career adapt ability level?

5- Do organizational factors influence employees EMO level?

5-1 Do employees with EMO work in specific organizations? (Private vs. Public)

5-2 Does the level of EMO depend on the psychological contract in which they work?
(Relational vs. transactional)

5-3 Do employees with EMO work in organizations with FHRM?

5-4 Do organizations with FHRM impact employee's individual determinants to improve EMO?

5-5 Do organizations with transactional contract impact employee's individual determinants to improve EMO?

6- What are the differences and similarities comparing Polish and Iranian research studies?

1.3. Research gap

A comprehensive study on previous research and literature reviews, despite the importance of the issue, shows some important research gaps that this study purposes address:

1-EMO model is a new concept as a pattern of adaptive behaviour to new relationships with the employer that assessing and helping the adaptive employee behaviour in FHRM. It was only investigated at Polish employees, so this theory should be replicated and validated for the other cultures. As Hofstede (1992) stated: "The validity of a theory is limited by national boundaries." So, it would be interesting to examine this model in Iran.

Nowadays, the approach of Iranian organizations toward employees has changed and they tend to implement flexible human resource management. Prior employability competencies models did not consider the role of the flexibility of human resource management.

So, it is important to retest EMO model to considering employees' behavior in this new situation and considering the role of culture in it.

2- In similar previous research in Poland, the **attribution style** of employees was not considered. However, in this study, the relationship of employees' attribution style will be measured as an individual factor. Since frequent failures, obstacles, and changes at the workplace can influence individuals' attribution styles and affects employee's employment stability (Furnham et al. 1992), it is important to know how employees react in changing labour markets by their attribution style.

Scholars mentioned that attribution styles are essential, especially in motivationally challenging professions (Corr and Gray (1996). So it is necessary to study this factor as an individual determinant in the uncertain environment of organizations. It might be important to question if an employee's way of attributing can be shaped their employability orientation market in this context.

Pawłowska (2019) suggested that further research could focus on attribution styles in EMO contexts to know how employees interpret the occurring phenomena and cause of occurrences. Therefore, this factor is considered in this study.

3-This study considers the relationship of **Managerial position as organizational determinant**, and also **marital status** of the employees with EMO in order to learn more about the characteristics of employees and their sociodemographic variables. These variables help scholars to know the characteristics of employees who show employability market orientation in the labour market.

Table 1-1 demonstrates the differences of prior research in Poland and current study in Iran.

4- The EMO model is designed with the default FHRM in organizations, but the question arises that does this model work in organizations which want to implement FHRM in their mission?

In this study, the relationship between FHRM as organizational factors in both independent variable and moderating ones will be considered to investigate the role of organizational determinants on employee's employability behavior. The result helps the Iranian organizations identify the related factors and how they act to promote EMO in employees.

5- Comparing the result of this study in two countries, Iran and Poland (including economic & cultural differences) in the EMO model. Hofstede (1984) mentioned the differences between countries, and it could be worth considering the cross-cultural investigation of EMO between these two countries.

Table 1-1.The comparison between Iranian and Polish research on the individual and organizational determinants

Iranian research	Polish research
Considering Attribution style as an individual factor	Not reviewed
Considering FHRM as independent organizational factor	Not reviewed
Considering FHRM as moderating role of individual factors	Not reviewed
Considering psychological contract as moderating role of individual factors	Not reviewed
Not reviewed	Considering Professional Flexibility as an individual factors
Not reviewed	Considering Boundaryless Career as an individual factors
Measuring the relationship of Managerial position	

with EMO.	
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Source: own elaboration

Section 2

2.1. Research hypotheses

In this section, appropriate hypotheses are assigned based on questions and research goals.

EMO is a behaviour model that is assumed to help improve adaptation in employees in front of changing the organization's approach in the flexibility of human resource management and changing the relationship of the employees and employers.

Prior similar research in Poland showed that polish employees who exhibit EMO show employability (Pawłowska, 2017). It is assumed that EMO show employability in Iranian employees. However, according to Shi, Wang (2011) cited Hofstede (2001), there is enormous cultural diversity among employees from different countries and regions. Gerber (2009) suggested that further research should study the specific impact of cultural and economic background on career guidance (differences) in more detail. So, it is worthwhile to test EMO in the other culture (Iran) between employees to know the relationship between employee's EMO behaviour and employability.

In addition, one of the consequences of implementing flexible human resource management and changing psychological contract, which is made the changing in the relationship between the employees and employers, is feeling job insecurity (Fullerton, Robertson & Dixon, 2018). Perceived job insecurity pertains to employees' feelings of uncertainty about their future (De Witte, 1999; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002; De Witte & Naesswall, 2003). Therefore, employment uncertainty limits the ability to plan ahead (Morcos, 2009). Accordingly, research suggests that perceived threats to the existence and future of a job may be as harmful as job loss itself (Morcos, 2009).

According to Pawłowska's model (2017), the state of adaptation of EMO is attained by the employees who feel a low level of job insecurity and have high employability. In other words, applying Employability Market Orientation is related to the norm of adaptation to the changing labour market. So, it is expected that employees with low job insecurity and high employability have achieved an adaption point.

Therefore, to answer **question 1, 2** the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: There is a positive relationship between EMO and employability.

H2: There is a negative relationship between EMO and job insecurity.

Demographic factors such as age, gender, educational level, marital status, and type of contract, work experience, management position, and the number of jobs up to now, employment time in current job,

planning for working in current job are also assumed to be related to the attitudes and behaviors of workers. The personal consequences of workers' attitudes and behaviors are believed to affect people and their value to the company and the economy as a whole.

Research shows that some demographic variables can also affect employability and job insecurity. Prior research shows that there is a relationship between age and employability; age, gender; and job insecurity (Dooley & et al, 1987; Moris, 2006). Roskies & Louis - Guerin (1990) believed that educational level has relationships with job insecurity.

Some studies that focus on how gender affects perceptions of job insecurity found that men tend to report higher levels of job insecurity (e.g., Kinnunen et al., 1999; Rosenblatt & et al., 1999). Similar research in Poland showed that education and gender have a relationship with EMO. However, these relationships are not salient (Pawłowska, 2019). In line with Pawłowska's research, in this study, the relationship of demographic factors is considered. Furthermore, the marital status and the employee's managerial position in the workplace are investigated too. According to La'szlo' et al. (2010), married can be considered as an important mediator of job insecurity because it provides additional protection for the couple's second income. It is expected that marital status has a positive relationship with the employability's behavior (to gain income), and employees' managerial position has a negative relation with EMO. This inspiration for testing the managerial position in the workplace back to Soehnlein(1998), who believed that many lower-level managers do not have the new capabilities (knowledge, skills, and abilities) needed to operate in this new environment.

Therefore, to answer **question 3**, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H 3: There is a relationship between socio-demographic variables and EMO.

H 3a: There is a relationship between age and EMO.

H 3b: There is a relationship between gender and EMO.

H 3c: There is a relationship between employee's marital status and EMO.

H 3d: There is a relationship between employee's education level and EMO.

H 3e: There is a relationship between employee's managerial position (executive manager) in the workplace and EMO.

H 3f: There is a relationship between employee's type of contract (permanent vs temporary) and EMO.

H 3g: There is a relationship between work experience and EMO.

H 3i: There is a relationship between the employment time in current company and EMO.

H 3j: There is a relationship between the number of jobs and EMO.

H 3k: There is a relationship between planning for working in the current job and EMO.

Based on social-cognitive theory, Individual differences in behavior patterns in different situations reflect possible personal variables such as the coding or interpretation of the experiences of individuals, as well as their expectations, values, goals, and self-regulation strategies (Mischel, 1973, 1990; Wright, Mischel, Shoda, 1994). Since EMO is a behavioural pattern, so the individual traits that improve EMO should be considered.

In this study, cognitive flexibility, career adapt ability scale, and attribution style are considered as individual determinants.

Cognitive flexibility is one of the factors that determine the individual's ability to adapt to environmental change. Scholars expressed the importance of characteristics of the cognitive structure in the occupational adaptation process (Wieczorkowska, 2001; Pawłowska, 2017) and the strongest predictors of effectiveness, achievement, and career development (Ng & Feldman, 2010).

Prior similar research in Poland confirmed that Cognitive alternatives and cognitive control have a positive relationship with EMO. So, it is expected that these individual factors have positive relations in Iranian EMO.

Therefore, to answer **question 4, 4-1** the following hypotheses were proposed:

H4: There is a relationship between cognitive flexibility and EMO.

H 4a: There is a relationship between cognitive control and EMO.

H 4b: There is a relationship between cognitive alternatives and EMO.

Attribution style is one of the individual traits that express how individuals interpret and investigate the occurring phenomena. Implementing FHRM and changing psychological contract in the organizations may seem hostile to them if they interpret that these changes are directed at themselves and hostile, they will consider their employer to be an enemy that has fired them, and they will also believe that the labour market is against them and does not support them. So, they resist these changes instead of adapting and seeking appropriate behaviors. However, it is important for individuals to see their opportunities in the changeable environment and new circumstances (Pawłowska, 2019).

Scholars have proposed that attribution style and job search have a positive correlation (Kulik and Rowland, 1986).

Therefore, to answer **question 4-2**, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H 5: There is a relationship between EMO and attribution style.

H 5a: There is a relationship between EMO and locus of control.

H 5b: There is a relationship between EMO and stability.

H 5c: There is a relationship between EMO and controllability.

One of the individual's adaptation potential is Savickas's Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) that builds their current strategies for solving problems and shaping their vocational self-concept. Career adapt-ability has a significant impact on the consequences of the capabilities of a career individual's life (Soresi, Nota, & Ferrari, 2012; Johnston, 2013), self-confidence (Van Vianen, Klehe, Koen, & Dries, 2012; Johnston, 2013), also work engagement (Rossier et al., 2012; Johnston, 2013). It helps individuals to adjust their behaviours to factual circumstances and interact with the environment.

Since EMO acts in line with CAAS, So it is expected that individuals with the CAAS's ability has a positive relationship with EMO and increasing CAAS by training lead to develop EMO.

Therefore, to answer **question 4-3**, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H 6: There is a relationship between CAAS and EMO.

H 6a: There is a relationship between Concern and EMO.

H 6b: There is a relationship between Control and EMO.

H 6c: There is a relationship between Curiosity and EMO.

H 6d: There is a relationship between Confidence and EMO.

The flexibility of human resource management and psychological contract is assumed to be the main reason in organizations for changing the attitude and behaviour of employees in the labour market. These two factors are the basis of organizational determinants.

According to Pawłowska (2017), an individual's ability to reveal Employability Market Orientation depends on the organizational determinant such as the psychological contract.

To know the effects of the type of psychological contract (transactional contract or relational contract) on EMO, it will be assumed that employees working in the private sector have transactional contracts and employees in public have a relational contract. In other words, the workplace is considered as an indicator of the psychological contract.

A similar study in Poland showed that employees with EMO work in public and private sectors, and the type of psychological contract (relational and transactional) does not change the employee's EMO. So, it is expected that the same result will be in Iran.

Therefore, to answer **question 5, 5-1, 5-2** the following hypotheses were proposed:

H 7: There is a different level of EMO between private and public sectors

A previous similar study on EMO assumed that there was flexible human resource management in Polish organizations. This means that individuals who show EMO work in FHRM organizations (Pawłowska, 2017). The question is, do people show EMO behaviour only in FHRM situations. It is worthwhile to know the relation of FHRM with individuals' who show EMO.

Furthermore, scholars believed that FHRM affects employee adaptation attributes (i.e., knowledge, skills, and behaviors) to environmental change (Ngo, Loi, 2008). So, it is expected that FHRM plays a moderating role in improving EMO by increasing an individual's adaptation behavior.

Based on the description given in this study, FHRM will be considered in two roles: independent and moderating roles, which affect individual factors.

Therefore, to answer **question 5-3, 5-4** the following hypotheses were proposed:

H 8: There is a relationship between organizations with FHRM and EMO

H 9: FHRM moderates the relations between Attribution Style and EMO.

H 9a: FHRM moderates the relationships between Locus of control and EMO

H 9b: FHRM moderates the relationships between stability and EMO

H 9c: FHRM moderates the relationships between Controllability and EMO

H 10: FHRM moderates the relationships between Cognitive Flexibility and EMO

H 10a: FHRM moderates the relationships between Cognitive Control and EMO

H10b: FHRM moderates the relationships between Cognitive Alternatives and EMO

H 11: FHRM Moderates the relationships between CAAS and EMO

H11a: FHRM moderates the relationships between Concern and EMO

H 11b: FHRM moderates the relationships between Control and EMO

H 11c: FHRM moderates the relationships between Curiosity and EMO

H 11d: FHRM moderates the relations relationships between Confidence and EMO

Based on Mirmohammadi, Rahimian's study, psychological contract as a moderate factor plays a role in the effect of work-oriented on job attitudes (Mirmohammadi, Rahimian, 2018). So, it is expected that psychological contract as an organizational determinants moderates the adaptability of individual traits to improve EMO.

In this study, the independent and the moderating role of organizational factors (FHRM and psychological contract) will be investigated. Knowing the positions of organizational factors from a practical view helps managers affect individual traits to improve EMO.

Therefore, to answer **question 5-5** the following hypotheses were proposed:

H12: Psychological Contract moderates the relations relationships between Attribution Style and EMO

H12a: Psychological Contract moderates the relationships between Locus of control and EMO

H12b: Psychological Contract moderates the relationships between stability and EMO

H12c: Psychological Contract moderates the relationships between Controllability and EMO

H13: Psychological Contract moderates the relationships between Cognitive Flexibility and EMO

H13a: Psychological Contract moderates the relationships between Cognitive Control and EMO

H13b: Psychological Contract moderates the relationships between Cognitive Alternatives and EMO

H 14: Psychological Contract moderates the relationships between CAAS and EMO

H 14a: Psychological Contract moderates the relationships between Concern and EMO

H 14b: Psychological Contract moderates the relationships between Control and EMO

H 14c: Psychological Contract moderates the relationships between Curiosity and EMO

H 14d: Psychological Contract moderates the relationships between Confidence and EMO

Scholars believe that it is necessary to validate management theories by considering the cultural context (Martinez; Toyne, 2000; Almeida, 2018).

In similar prior research in Poland, the economic and cultural factors were excluded from the analysis process. However, the researcher suggested that these relationships should be researched further, and they should not be overlooked (Pawłowska, 2017). Thanks to accessible data and results of Polish research, this comparative study will be considered the economic and cultural factors in Poland and Iran.

Therefore, to answer question 6, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H 15: The results of EMO model in Iran has differences and similarities with that of Poland.

H15a: There are differences in the relationship between individual/organizational indicators and EMO in Iran and Poland

H15b: There are similarities in the relationship between EMO and adaptive indicators (employability and job insecurity) in Iran and Poland

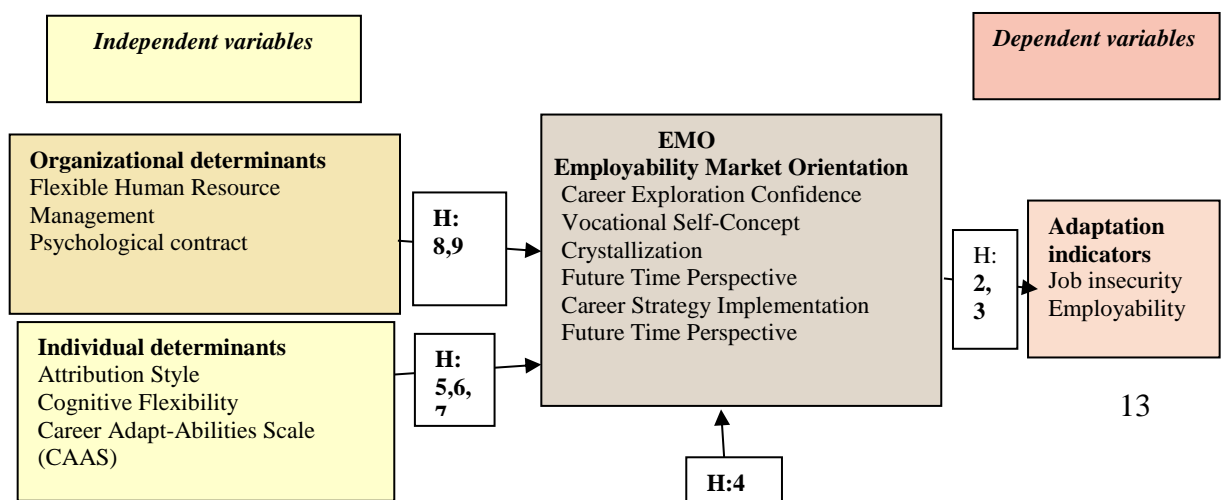
2.2. Research setting – Models with hypotheses

According to the hypotheses, the following research procedure models are presented in Figures 2-1 and 2-2.

In this study, in addition to testing model 1 in Iran, model 2 is also presented. The difference between the two models is how organizational factors are positioned as independent variables or moderator ones.

The final model has been chosen after data analysis.

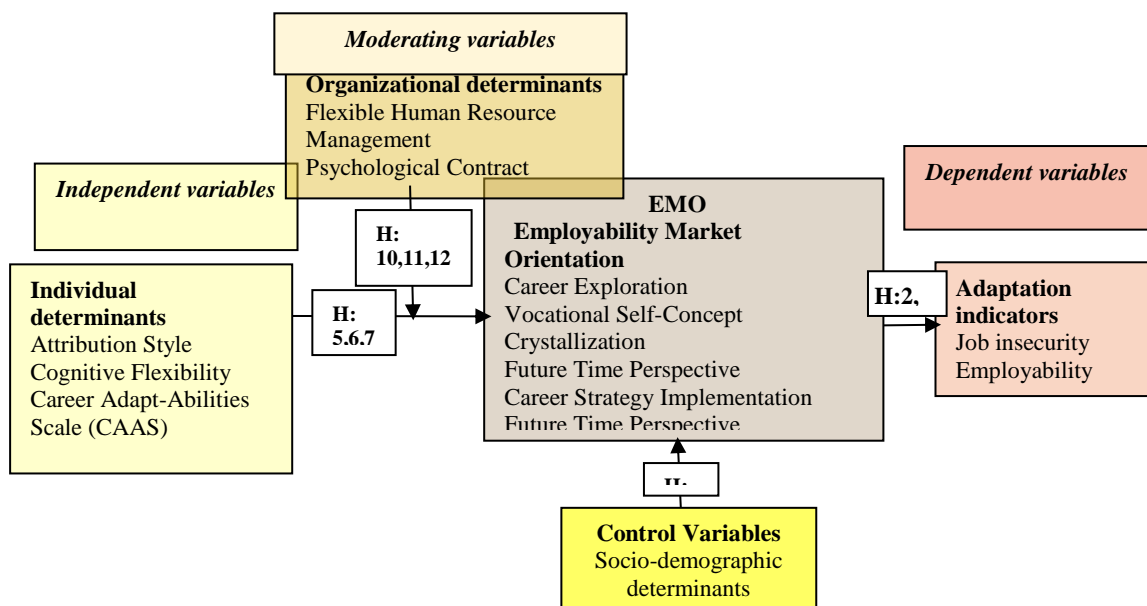
Figure 2-1. Model 1



Source: Compiled on the basis of Pawłowska, 2017

As mentioned above, model 1 was designed based on the relationship between independent variables (individual and organizational variables) and EMO. However, assessing the effect of moderating role in social-psychological research lead to enrich the models (Baron, Kenny, 1986). Therefore, model 2 was introduced in this study to investigate the moderating role of organizational determinants on the relationship between individual variables and EMO.

Figure 2-2. Model 2



Source: own elaboration

2.3. The Statistical sample

Since this study is repeating the study performed in Poland (Pawłowska, 2014), the number of participants is the same as that study to compare the results.

Statistical Population will be chosen employees in two groups:

- Employees work in public sector (civil servants)
- Employees work in private sector (sales staff)

Employees were hired under two types of psychological contract (relational and transactional). The groups are contrasted in terms of the rules that govern the relationship between the employer and the employee. It is assumed that in the private sector, the employees have temporary contract and work based on a transactional psychological contract who have short-term and unstable job.

On the contrary, in the public sector, employees have permanent contract with relational psychological contract. In other words, public employees are considered to have long-term and stable job.

According to Pawłowska (2019), it is reasonable to assume that employees in public sector (civil servants) perform within a framework of relational contract, and employees in private ones (sales staff) perform within a framework of transactional one, to examine Employability market orientation based on the set research goals.

This study was supposed to select 150 samples from employees working in public and private sectors (based on Pawlowka research, 2017). To have 150 complete questionnaires (paper and pencil method) from each group, two sets of 170 questionnaires were randomly distributed between employees working in public and private sectors to keep a safe margin for possible defective questionnaires. 169 distributed questionnaires were complete in the public sector, so they were included in the study. However, 151 questionnaires were complete in the private sector, and 19 defective ones were omitted.

Finally, 320 people were surveyed, including 169 civil servants (public organizations) and 151 sales staff members (private organizations).

2.3. Research method

The research method used in this study is a descriptive correlational method to examine the relationship between individual and organizational variables with the behavioural model of employability. This research is a survey-analytical method that uses standard questionnaires for each variable.

Table 2-3 illustrates the research methodology of this study. According to the two conceptual models of this research, the independent and dependent variables for model 1 are as follows:

A: Independent variable: The independent variables in this study are individual and organizational factors:

Individual factors:

Cognitive flexibility, Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS), Attribution style

Organizational factors:

Psychological contract, Flexible Human Resource Management (FHRM)

B: Dependent variable: The dependent variable in this research is Employability Market orientation (EMO) and Adaptation indicators.

Adaptation indicators:

Employability and Job insecurity

The independent, dependent and the Moderator variables for model 2 are as follows:

A: *Independent variable:*

Individual factors:

Attribution Style, Cognitive flexibility index, Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS)

B: *Dependent variable:*

Employability Market orientation (EMO)

Adaptation indicators: Employability and Job insecurity

C: *Moderator variable*

Organizational factors:

Flexible Human Resource Management (FHRM), Psychological contract

Table 2-1. Research methodology

Philosophy of Research	
Research Approach	Quantitative
Research Orientation	Applied research
Research Strategy	Survey
Sampling Plan	Possible Sampling
Sampling Method	Simple randomized
Research Tools	Questionnaire
Statistical sample	Employees work in private sector Employees work in public sector
Statistical Analysis	Correlation analysis Multiple Regression analysis by SPSS and SEM (AMOS)

Source: own elaboration

2.4. Data collection method - measurements

In this study, a survey research method through a questionnaire was used to collect information and data. The questionnaire of this research consists of eight standard questionnaires in research variables and their dimensions.

Table 2-2 shows the references of the questionnaires and mention what dimensions each questionnaire covers.

For measuring the reliability, *Cronbach's alpha coefficient* was used to assess the questionnaire's reliability, given that the level of measurement is sequential with five ranks.

Therefore, after translating the questionnaire to Persian, it was distributed in a pilot test including 30 of the participants to measure the questionnaire's reliability.

Table 2-2: List of questionnaires and Dimensions

Questionnaire	Authors	Dimensions	The number of items
EMO questionnaire	Pawłowska, 2017	I. Career Exploration item 1-8 CE II. Vocational Self-Concept –Crystallization item 9-13VSCC III. Career -Planning item 14-20 CP IV. Career Strategy Implementation item 21-23CSI V. Future Time Perspective item 24-28 FTP	28
FHRM questionnaire	Bhattacharya, Gibson, and Doty, 2005	I. Skill Flexibility -item 1-7SF II. Behavior Flexibility-item 8-15BF	15
Employability (EMA) questionnaire	Modified by Pawłowska, 2017		7
Job insecurity questionnaire	Job insecurity index		3
Cognitive flexibility inventory questionnaire	John P. Dennis • Jillon S. Vander Wal	I. Controllable-item 1-7C II. Perceive/generate multiple alternative explanations/solutions item 8-20	20
CAAS Career Adapt-Abilities Scale	International form of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS)	Concern-item 1-6 Control-item 7-12 Curiosity-item 13-18 Confidence-item 19-24	24
Psychological contract questionnaire	Rousseau 1989	Content orient: I. Transaction II. Relational III. Balanced/hybrid IV. Transitional/uncertain	6
Attribution Styles Scale (ASQ)	Peterson and Amy Semmel	I. Locus of control –LC 1-6 II. Stability-Stab 1-6 III. Controllability-Cntrlaty 1-6	18

Source: own elaboration

2.5. Statistical analysis method

In this section, the obtained data are analyzed. The statistical analysis was based on the use of the Pearson correlation coefficient, linear regression, hierarchical regression analysis, multi-factor analysis of variance, and a structural model. In this regard, "SPSS19, Structural Equation Model (SEM) with "AMOS" software were used to check the consistency of the obtained results with the results expected

by the hypotheses. The results are presented primarily in a descriptive form. The underlying statistical data are included in the statistical annex. Finally, the conceptual models of the research are tested.

Section 3

Results

3.1. Investigation of research hypotheses

Structural equation modelling using the Amos software was used to test hypotheses H1-H14. The full path model and measurement model is shown in the figure below. The measurement model's properties

The results of hypothesis testing related to relationships between variables are summarized in Table 3-1

Table 3-1. Hypothesis testing results (H1-H8)

Hypotheses	Results
H1: There is a positive relationship between EMO and employability.	Confirmed
H2: There is a negative relationship between EMO and job insecurity.	Not confirmed
H3: There is a relationship between socio-demographic variables and EMO	Partially confirmed The education and the number of jobs are confirmed
H4: There is a positive relationship between cognitive flexibility and EMO	Confirmed
H5: There is a relationship between EMO and attribution style	Partially confirmed Only in stability dimension is confirmed.
H 6: There is a relationship between CAAS and EMO.	Confirmed
H7: there is a different level of EMO between private and public sectors	Not confirmed
H8: There is a relationship between organizations with FHRM and EMO	Confirmed

Source: own elaboration

In the following, the moderating role of organizational factors, i.e., Psychological contract and Flexibility of Human Resource Management, in the relationship between individual factors and EMO is investigated.

Table 3-2. Results of moderating role of organizational variables on the relationship between individual determinants and EMO

Hypothesis	Result
FHRM has a moderating effect on the relationship between locus of Control and EMO.	CONFIRMED
FHRM has a moderating effect on the relationship between stability and EMO	UNCONFIRMED
FHRM has a moderating effect on the relationship between Control and EMO	UNCONFIRMED
FHRM has a moderating effect on the relationship between Cognitive Flexibility and EMO	CONFIRMED
FHRM has a moderating effect on the relationship between CAAS and EMO	CONFIRMED
Psychological contract has a moderating effect on the relationship between locus of control and EMO	UNCONFIRMED

Psychological contract has a moderating effect on the relationship between stability and EMO	UNCONFIRMED
Psychological contract has a moderating effect on the relationship between Controllability and EMO	UNCONFIRMED
The psychological contract has a moderating effect on the relationship between Cognitive Flexibility and EMO	CONFIRMED
The psychological contract has a moderating effect on the relationship between CAAS and EMO	CONFIRMED

Source: The results of research

As Table 3-3 shows, the comparison of the results of examining EMO model between Iran and Poland shows *differences* and *similarities* in the relationship between individual / organizational determinants and EMO. There are similarities in the result of the influence of cognitive flexibility, career adapt ability scale, and differences in the relationship between education, psychological contract, and EMO. On the other hand, there are differences and similarities between EMO and adaptive indicators (employability and job insecurity) between Iranian and Polish employees. The significant difference is related to relationships between EMO and job insecurity. EMO has no relationship with job insecurity in Iranian employees. Conversely, EMO has an inverse relation with job insecurity, especially between the civil servants more than the sales staff in Polish research.

Furthermore, Both Iranian and Polish employees with EMO behaviour have strong employability.

Table 3-3 The comparison of testing EMO model and determining the influence of organizational and individual factors on EMO in Iran and Poland

Hypotheses	IRAN	POLAND
There is a positive relationship between EMO and employability	CONFIRMED	CONFIRMED
There is a negative relationship between EMO and job insecurity.	NOT CONFIRMED	PARTLY CONFIRMED Employees with strong EMO exhibit a lower level of Job Insecurity; this relationship fade away in line with stronger relationship between Job Insecurity and Cognitive Control
There is a relationship between socio-demographic variables and EMO.	PARTLY CONFIRMED There is a relation in employee's education and the number of jobs up to now with EMO	PARTLY CONFIRMED Education has inverse relationship with EMO
There is a relationship between cognitive flexibility and EMO.	CONFIRMED	CONFIRMED
There is a relationship between CAAS and EMO.	CONFIRMED	EMO acts in line with CAAS However, EMO performances more influencer than CAAS
There is a relationship between EMO and attribution style.	PARTLY CONFIRMED This relationship shows Only in stability dimensions	NOT REVIEWED
There is a different level of EMO between private and public sectors.	NOT CONFIRMED	CONFIRMED Employees who work in private sectors show more EMO.
There is a relationship between organizations with FHRM and EMO	CONFIRMED	It is supposed

The moderating role of FHRM and Psychological contract on individual factors and EMO	PARTLY CONFIRMED These variables effect on individual factors except on stability and controllability	NOT REVIEWED
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Source: Own elaboration with the result of Polish research

Section3

Discussion

This study examines the EMO model for Iranian public and private sector employees, distinguishing the relationship between EMO and individual / organizational factors. In this regard, some hypotheses have been proposed, evaluated, and analyzed.

The following discussions are presented in the order of research questions:

1- The research results are consistent with the assertion that employability market orientation skills can help Iranian employees improve their employability in both public and private organizations.

Fugate, Ashforth , (2004) and Van der Heijden et al. (2006, 2018), concluded that employability is one of the adaptations of individuals' abilities in today's uncertain business environment. Thus, it is inferred that employees with EMO behaviour and resultant increasing employability, have a better adaptation rate to the labour market. Therefore, the results of this research are in accordance with previous research in Poland (Pawłowska, 2017).

2-Results showed that EMO did not have a significant correlation with employee's job insecurity in Iran. Pawłowska in 2017 showed that EMO and job insecurity have an inverse relationship in such a way that increasing EMO lowers the job insecurity especially between civil servants. However, this relationship may decrease in the presence of stronger relationship between job insecurity and cognitive control.

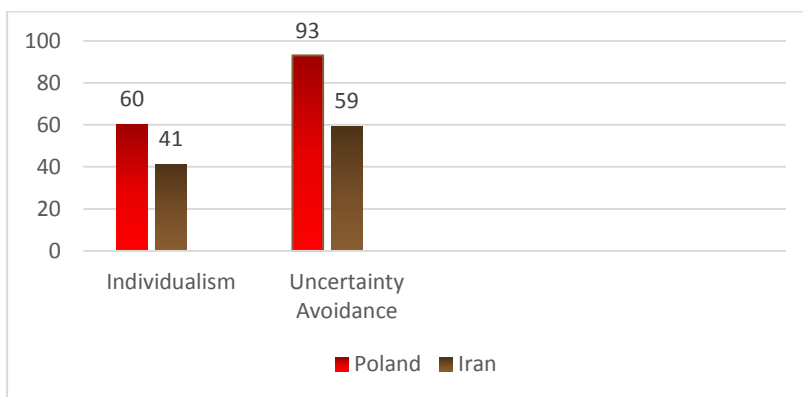
The differences between the results of Iranian and Polish researches can possibly be interpreted using the following theories:

- Probst & Lawler in 2006 and Greenhalg & Rosenblatt in 2010 revealed that culture influences the sense of job insecurity especially in individualism/ collectivism (IND) societies. Given the fact that Iran has a more *collectivistic society* than Poland (Hofstede theory, 1984), so the employer/employee relationships are observed in ethical terms (similar to a family link), engagement and promotion decisions, considering the employee's in group and manager are considered as the boss of group. So in this society, the employee expects the employer to ensure job security, gives up his/her interests for the benefit of others, does not monitor his/her professional situation, and believes that the employer manages all the issues. On the other hand, Poland is an *individualistic society* where the employer/employee relationship is a type of contract based on reciprocal advantage. The hiring and

promotion decisions are assumed as a value, and the manager is the boss of individuals. Therefore, Job insecurity is the concern of employees in individualistic societies.

In addition, Roll, Siu & Li (2015) proved that uncertainty avoidance (UAI) impacts on job insecurity. Hofstede in 1984 showed how much the citizens of a country feel uncomfortable with uncertainty. Societies with high UAI prefer their lives to be secure and structured (Staufenbiel & König, 2010; Roll, Siu, Li, 2015). Individuals in societies with high UAI feel a greater threat of job insecurity than those with lower UAI. So, they formulate structures, procedures, rules, and regulations to deal with their uncertainties and give them a certain degree of predictability of what will happen when they are unemployed. (Isyaku, 2014, Roll, Siu, Li, 2015). Therefore, when they are faced with job insecurity, people will be more aware of how to protect themselves after losing their job. In the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension (UAI), Iran got 59, and Poland 93, so both countries have a high tendency for avoiding uncertainty. However, avoidance of uncertainty in Poland is higher than Iran. In other words it is expected that Polish employees have more eager for job security. Figure 3-1 shows the differences of IND and UAI between Iran and Poland. It can be hypothesized that culture plays a paramount role in job insecurity.

Figure 3- 21: Comparison of Poland and Iran in IND and UID dimensions (based on Hofstede theory)



Source: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/>

- Furthermore, Baseri in 2005 and RamezaniFarzane in 2006 showed that Iranian labour law makes restrictions for the employer not to dismiss employees easily. So the employees feel job security even if they do not perform their job properly. It is possible that the feeling of job insecurity is not felt in organizations in Iran due to the Iranian labour law.

- Last but not least, Moris (2019) mentioned that employability has no correlation with job insecurity. The results of the current study are consistent with their conclusion as is shown in Table 3-2. This means that regarding career expectations of employees; employability has never been related to job

security. So it can be concluded that employability skills behaviour in the labour market has no association to job insecurity.

By considering the above mentioned theories, the absence of correlation between job insecurity and other variables should be conceptualized in a different way.

3-Results showed that EMO expression in employees occurs regardless of age and gender, which is consistent with the same research in Poland (Pawłowska, 2019). However, *education in Iranian employees has a positive relationship with EMO*. The higher the education level of the employees, the more the expression of EMO. Education improves one's insight and awareness, so the increased EMO may be explained by raising the individual's understanding of career life. These findings are consistent with those of Bridgstock (2008); Mason et al. (2009) indicated that enhancing the skills of graduates increases their attractiveness to potential employers. Conversely, education has an inverse relationship with EMO in Poland (Pawłowska, 2019).

In addition, marital status, work experience, type of contract, management position, employment time in current job, and planning for working in the current job have no relationship with EMO. These results are in accordance with Potgieter (2012) suggesting that there is no need to emphasize these socio-demographic variables during professional development and career orientation research.

Furthermore, the current study results show that the number of jobs up to now has a positive relationship with EMO. This finding confirmed that the ability to change jobs frequently and finding the new one is a potential ability for expressing EMO.

Finally, investigating the role of the type of contract showed that the type of employment contract does not solve employees' issues in the changing labour market (Pawłowska, 2019). Therefore, the type of contract does not show a relationship with EMO both in Iranian and Polish employees.

4- The results of the relationship between individual factors and EMO showed that there is a positive relationship between cognitive flexibility (CF) and EMO. Employees who have the ability to analyze the reality correctly and are conscious of the current relations between employer-employee, show adaptive behaviour to this relationship.

The employee with the cognitive alternatives and cognitive control's skills have many alternative behaviours in the face of changes, so they can control the situation and are able to react, all due to a positive relationship to EMO. This finding of research is in line with Pawłowska's study (2017) that believed informing employees with formal knowledge and giving firmly professional skills are not adequate for employees to adapt to the rules of current's labour market. Professional socialization

improves employee' skills in terms of cognitive alternatives and cognitive flexibility to adapt their behaviour in the changing labour market.

The result is consistent with Magrin, Marini, and Nicolotti (2019) that confirmed cognitive flexibility has a major role as a resilience resource for employability especially in disable people.

The results of this research demonstrated the positive role of CAAS in the employees' EMO. These findings provided that concern, control, curiosity and confidence of the individuals have a significant impact on EMO. The result is consistent with Coetzee, Ferreira & Potgieter, (2015); de Guzman, Choi, (2017) that individuals with high levels of employability skills are predicted to benefit from active career adaptability. So, employability skills should be based on personal abilities and skills (Tien, Yu-Chen, Wang, 2017).

The result of the relationship between dimensions of attribution style and EMO showed that there is no relationship between locus of control, controllability and EMO in Iran. However, it showed that stability of the employees has a positive relationship with EMO. This result is a bit challenging especially in the relationship between locus of control and EMO. Although *there is a negative correlation between locus of control and EMO, if the organization determinants effect on locus of control it shows a positive relationship with EMO*. It means that individual's locus of control needs additional circumstances or motivation to express EMO.

Findings also indicated that *stability has a relationship with EMO provided that not influenced by organizational factors*.

On the other hand, *controllability has no relationship with EMO regardless of the effect of organizational factors on it*.

As the results showed, it is noteworthy to say that the locus of control and stability each has a positive relationship with employability. So, it is consistent with the finding of Fugate, Kinicki, Ashforth, 2004; Petrovic et al., 2009, Bargsted (2017) Ćurić Dražić, Petrović, & Vukelić (2018), that confirmed the relationship between locus of control and employability, and also acknowledged Kulik and Rowland (1986) that revealed stability improves the employability.

The results showed no significant relationship between controllability and employability. To the best of my knowledge, there is limited research on this subject. However, Anderson and Riger (1991) showed that controllability provided a predictive indicator action and proactivity. So, due to the proactive nature of employability, it seems that controllability in an employee's style impacts on the employees' insight of the career life. This study could not prove this supposition. Further research on this subject is needed.

5-Since organizational determinants can affect individual factors, the findings of the study are valuable by considering the fact that individual factors are trainable behaviours which enhance their employability market orientation to meet the challenges of the labour market.

The results in organizational factors showed that organizational determinants (flexible human resource management and psychological contract) could have both independent and moderator impacts on EMO.

Employees in both public and private organizations revealed EMO, and the workplace does not change the employees EMO in Iran. The Pawłowska's study (2017) showed the same result. However, the average EMO level of sales staff is statistically significant higher than that of civil servants in Poland.

In addition, the results show that psychological contract has a relationship with EMO and is in accordance with Sok, Blomme, and Tromp (2013) who confirmed the relationship between psychological contract and self-perceived employability (intentions of intra-organizational mobility, employee development, and perceived labour market opportunities). This finding is also in line with Scholarios, et al. (2008) that showed employers have a positive influence on the psychological contract through employability and career management practices. However, Pawłowska's study, 2017 showed that 'the relationship between EMO and the psychological contract cannot be unambiguously confirmed'.

6-The results showed that the flexibility of human resource management could influence on EMO behavior to react to a variety of labour market's demands. It may be the employer's best interest to improve their work-related competencies or to create (other) jobs for employees that is an advantage. This finding is in accordance with prior studies (Thijssen, Van der heijden and Rocco, 2008).

Moreover, this result is consistent with Pawłowska's study in 2017. Her study was based on FHRM organizations.

To summarize, two conceptual models were tested. Both models are quite similar to each other in considering four main variables including Individual, organizational, socio-demographics and adaptability. The difference between these models is the role of organizational factors. In model 1, Organizational factors act as independent variables. However, in model 2, organizational factors play a moderating role. Based on results, both of these models show no relationship between job insecurity and controllability of attribution style with EMO. In model 1, locus of control has no relationship with EMO. On the other hand, in model 2, stability has no significant correlation with EMO. Both of these models confirm the relationship of individuals, organizational and adaptive behavior (employability)

with EMO. However, it seems that model 2 is more enriched than model 1 due to practical aspects of the impact of organizational factors on individual determinants to enhance EMO.

Conclusion

Given the unstable environment of the labour market in today's world, there is need to implement flexible human resource management which results in changing of relational psychological contract to transactional one in companies in order to gain a competitive advantage. So it is necessary to use appropriate behavioural patterns for employees to acquire skills to respond to necessary changes. Employees should know that there is no longer lifelong occupation in today's labour market. The purpose of this study is to investigate how Iranian employees adapt to the flexibility of human resource management and changes in the relationship between the employee and the employer, based on EMO model. Also the Iranian employees' EMO level is measured and the factors which employees' EMO depends on are investigated.

The main results of this research can be summarized as follows:

- EMO can enhance employability in Iranian employees.
- EMO was not significantly related with employee's job insecurity in Iran.
- Education in Iranian employees has a positive relationship with EMO.
- Individual's locus of control needs organizational determinants as a condition to express EMO.

Accordingly, two models were tested:

Model 1: The influence of organizational factors as independent variables on EMO

Model 2: The influence of individual factors on EMO with moderating role of organizational determinants

Both of these models have accepted parameters.

However, it seems that model 2 is more enriched than model 1 due to practical aspects of the impact of organizational factors on individual determinants to enhance EMO.

Research on the employability market orientation and its adaptation to cultural and economic conditions in Iran is done for the first time.

The theoretical contributions of this study are:

- 1- Explaining the role of attributional styles as individual factors and examining the effect of its dimensions on the EMO.
- 2- Explaining the increasing role of flexible human resource management in the emergence of EMO.
- 3- Empirical indication in support of theoretical views on employability market orientation and how EMO are influenced by individual and organizational factors.
- 4- Significant role of organizational factors which accept both independent and mediating role to impact EMO.

The practical implementation of this study are:

- 1- The investigation of the moderating role of organizational factors on individual's characteristics offer an opportunity to improve the decision making of managers.
- 2- EMO model can help managers and decision-makers at the macro level to prevent unemployment in society and in creating a suitable environment for improving the employee's employability in organizations.
- 3- A relatively new construct, which is the EMO, has been studied in a different culture and economic and political conditions. This gives an in-depth knowledge of this construct.
- 4- The results of the PhD research broaden the knowledge of the determinants of EMO. A hypothesis emerges that EMO is displayed by employees regardless of situational factors. The role of individual traits is revealed.
- 5- People managing people should consider the needs of people with EMO when choosing how to manage people in order to effectively motivate them.

Suggestions for future Research

- 1- This research is based on a quantitative method. So, In the future, this research method can be done based on the qualitative method with an interview with employees. People have different and general perceptions of words and language in general. So, face-to-face interviews with employees can provide significant results.
- 2- Since many determinants in an organisation can influence the employability market orientation, it is recommended that more organizational determinants of EMO being identified in the future. From a practical point of view, it can be considered that organisational level affects the employability market orientation. So it is important to know these determinants.
- 3- To predict the employee's behaviour, it would be worthy to investigate the effect of employee commitment on EMO. It helps the managers to forecast the employee's employability behaviours.
- 4- It is valuable to search the relationships between attribution style and EMO in Poland to compare these two countries in this theory.
- 6- Since EMO is a new construct in theories of management. It is worthy studying more in different cultures and socio-economic factors.
- 7- It is worth repeating this study after the current pandemic due to the number of changes in economic
- 8- The topic concerns very current phenomena on the labour market, which will increase and develop in the future. The results of the doctorate are an inspiration for further research on these phenomena. In particular, they contribute to research on employee behavior. In addition, they contribute to the knowledge of differences in human resource management.

9- It is worth further researching people with low EMO to help them adapt to changes in the modern labor market and the psychological contract.

10- It is important to observe changes in psychological contracts on the Iranian labor market in the future - what is the scope of this phenomenon

11- It is worth doing research in the future using a different job insecurity gauge. Maybe it was job insecurity that there were differences between Poland and Iran and that is why this indicator should be constructed differently.

12- It seems important to investigate the role of an important determinant, which is cognitive flexibility, to develop it in employees.

Research limitations

Every study has certain limitations, and this research is not an exception to this rule. The limitations of this study should be taken into account and controlled in future research on employability market orientation.

1- The quantitative method has its own limitations due to boxing of respondents in predetermined questions.

2- In our research, all of our questionnaires were based on self-reports, so our results may lead to common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Nevertheless, it is reasonable that in measuring individual prospects, behaviors, and characteristics (such as attribution style, CFI, employability, EMO, job insecurity, CAAS), the structure of this study being made by participant's self-assessment.

3-Due to the prevailing conditions in some organizations, employees usually refuse to share information. In the present study, despite the assurance in the questionnaire that the information will be confidential by the researchers, but still due to the concerns of some staff disclosure of the answers to the questionnaires, the researcher has faced the lack of cooperation of some of them

4- In this study, the survey was distributed and analyzed before the current pandemic. However, the socio-economic factors before and during this pandemic shows many differences. So, during this pandemic, the answers of employees may be changed.

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