

# KALEIDOSCOPE CAREER MODEL: IMPACT OF PERSONAL, FAMILY, ORGANIZATIONAL AND SOCIAL VARIABLES

**Kiall Hildred, & Joana Carneiro Pinto**

*Faculdade Ciências Humanas, Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Portugal)*

## Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to explore the impact of personal (gender, career stage and educational level), family (marital status and children), organizational (type and size of company and work regime) and social (individualism vs collectivism) variables on the strategic career behaviors of the Kaleidoscope Career Model (authenticity, balance and challenge) in European workers in flexible working arrangements. Survey data was obtained from 739 employees (Male=442, 59.8%), with a mean age of 27.64 years (SD=8.48; Min-Max=18-70), working mostly full-time (n=398, 53.9%) and with 46.35% of their work being done remotely. Results suggest that the personal and family variables of gender, career stage, education, and having children, as well as the organizational and social variables of employment status and individualistic vs. collectivistic culture, have the most significant impact on strategic career behaviors. Knowledge about the impact of these variables can support organizational leaders in reviewing their policies and practices for managing the careers of their employees, particularly those in flexible working arrangements.

**Keywords:** *Strategic career behaviors, flexible working patterns, career management, European workers.*

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## 1. Introduction

The Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006) is a contemporary career model that uses the metaphor of the kaleidoscope to explain how strategic career behaviors (SCB) change throughout the life cycle, creating different career patterns depending on each person's characteristics, needs, and priority goals. The three SCB anticipated in the model are authenticity (seeking congruence between personal and organizational values) (AUT), balance (seeking balance between professional and non-professional activities) (BAL), and challenge (seeking opportunities for stimulation and progression at work) (CHA). Previous studies (*e.g.*, Mainiero & Gibson, 2018; Sullivan, Forret, Carraher, & Mainiero, 2009; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008) have attempted to analyze differences in these career behaviors and attitudes as a result of a set of individual/personal and family variables, such as gender, age, education, marital status, presence of children, and salary. So far, the research has produced conflicting findings, resulting in a lack of consensus about the impact of these variables on SCB. However, some important variables (namely structural: organizational and social) have been systematically excluded in these studies despite the urging of several authors (*e.g.*, Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2010; Pinto, 2010) on the need for their inclusion to obtain a more realistic and complete understanding of current career management practices. Besides that, most studies have been developed with traditional workers, not considering the flexible working arrangements which have grown in prevalent since the Covid-19 pandemic. This study uses the theoretical framework of the KCM to examine the needs for AUT, BAL, and CHA of European hybrid workers according to personal (gender, career stage, educational level), family (marital status, children), organizational (type of company, company size, working status) and social variables (individualism [IDV] vs collectivism [CLV]).

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

Participated in this study 739 European hybrid workers (women=283, 38.3%), with ages ranging from 18 to 70 years old (M=27.64; SD=8.48). Of these participants, 195 (26.4%) were married and 639 (86.5%) had no children. In terms of academic level, 275 (37.2%) had a secondary diploma, 301 (40.7%) had a bachelor degree, and 163 (22.1%) had a master or doctorate degree. Participants worked for European employers (n=739, 100%), predominantly full-time (n=398, 53.9%), in private (n=550, 74.4%) small (n=250, 37.2%) companies, and in the media, culture and graphical (116, 14.7%); mechanical and electrical

engineering (90, 11.4%); commerce (84, 10.6%); and education (79, 10%) sectors. Most participants were residents in individualistic countries ( $n=453$ , 61.3%) (Hofstede, 2001).

## 2.2. Variables and instruments

*Personal variables* included gender (1=male [M]; 2=female [F]); career stage (pre-adulthood [1=18-24], early adulthood [2=25-34], settling down [3=35-44], and middle/late adulthood [4=45-70]); and academic degree (1=undergraduate [UG]; 2=bachelor [BC]; 3=master [MS] and PhD). *Family variables* included marital status (1=single; 2=married); and children (0=no; 1=yes). *Organizational variables* included company type (0=public; 1=private), company size (1=small 1-25; 2=medium <250; 3=large  $\geq 250$ ), and employment status (1=full-time [FT]; 2=part-time [PT]). *Social variables* included the individualism dimension (0=low IDV; 1=high IDV) of the National Culture model (Hofstede (2001). An individualistic society privileges the “I” (personal identity) while a collectivistic society privileges the “we” (mutual psychological and practical dependence between the person and the in-group). *Career strategic behaviors* were measured using KCM, comprising 15 items (5 items per subscale: AUT, BAL, and CHA).

## 2.2. Procedure

This study is part of a wider project funded through FCT - *Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia*, I.P. under the EXPL/PSI-GER/0321/2021 project - *EURECA: New career strategies for new European remote careers*. The project was reviewed and approved by the CRC-W (Catholic Research Centre for Psychological, Family and Social Wellbeing) Review Board. Participants were informed of all ethical procedures and data were collected on an online platform in June 2022. To test the hypotheses correlations, t-tests/ANOVAS and hierarchical multiple regressions were performed using *jamovi* (version 2.3). All results were considered statistically significant if  $p < .05$ .

## 3. Results

For personal and family variables, gender was significantly correlated with AUT ( $r_{AUT}=.076$ ,  $p=.042$ ); career stage ( $r_{AUT}=.159$ ,  $p<.001$ ;  $r_{BAL}=.112$ ,  $p=.002$ ), marital status ( $r_{AUT}=.109$ ,  $p=.004$ ;  $r_{BAL}=.150$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and children ( $r_{AUT}=.095$ ,  $p=.010$ ;  $r_{BAL}=.196$ ,  $p<.001$ ) were significantly correlated with AUT and BAL; and educational level ( $r_{AUT}=.096$ ,  $p=.009$ ;  $r_{CHA}=.127$ ,  $p<.001$ ) was significantly correlated with AUT and CHA. For organizational and social variables, only employment status was significantly correlated with AUT ( $r_{AUT}=.163$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and CLV vs IDV was significantly correlated with AUT ( $r_{AUT}=.116$ ,  $p=.002$ ) and CHA ( $r_{CHA}=.137$ ,  $p<.001$ ). T-tests and ANOVAS showed statistically significant results for AUT according to personal and family variables, namely, gender ( $t(723)=-2.04$ ,  $p=.004$ ;  $M_M=17.7$  (SD=3.80);  $M_F=18.3$  (SD=4.40);  $Mdiff=-.627$ ), career stage ( $F(3,146)=6.027$ ,  $p<.001$ ;  $M_{18-24yo}=16.6$  (SD=4.29);  $M_{25-34}=17.3$  (SD=4.16);  $M_{35-44}=18.3$  (SD=4.31);  $M_{45-70}=17.5$  (SD=4.22); Post-Hoc $_{18-24,35-44}=-1.76$ ,  $p<.001$ ), educational level ( $F(2,404)=3.83$ ,  $p=.022$ ;  $M_{UG}=18.3$  (SD=4.03);  $M_{BC}=18.1$  (SD=3.81);  $M_{MS+phd}=17.2$  (SD=4.42); Post-Hoc $_{UG,MS+phd}=1.124$ ,  $p<.05$ ; Post-Hoc $_{BC,MS+phd}=.987$ ,  $p<.05$ ), marital status ( $t(700)=2.91$ ,  $p=.004$ ;  $M_{Single}=18.2$  (SD=3.96);  $M_{Married}=17.2$  (SD=4.27);  $Mdiff=.991$ ), and children ( $t(737)=2.583$ ,  $p=.010$ ;  $M_{No}=18.1$  (SD=3.93);  $M_{Yes}=17$  (SD=4.65);  $Mdiff=1.121$ ); for BAL on career stage ( $F(3,150)=4.115$ ,  $p=.008$ ;  $M_{18-24yo}=18.4$  (SD=3.82);  $M_{25-34}=18$  (SD=4.05);  $M_{35-44}=16.8$  (SD=4.39);  $M_{45-70}=16.2$  (SD=4.41); Post-Hoc $_{18-24,35-44}=1.67$ ,  $p<.05$ ; Post-Hoc $_{18-45,70}=2.281$ ,  $p<.001$ ; Post-Hoc $_{25-34,45-70}=1.877$ ,  $p<.05$ ), educational level ( $F(2,425)=3.38$ ,  $p=.035$ ;  $M_{UG}=17.3$  (SD=4.30);  $M_{BC}=16.6$  (SD=4.29);  $M_{MS+phd}=17.6$  (SD=4.11); Post-Hoc $_{BC,MS+phd}=-.987$ ,  $p<.05$ ), marital status ( $t(700)=-4.027$ ,  $p<.001$ ;  $M_{Single}=16.7$  (SD=4.19);  $M_{Married}=18.1$  (SD=4.17);  $Mdiff=-1.42$ ), and children ( $t(737)=-5.420$ ,  $p<.001$ ;  $M_{No}=16.7$  (SD=4.22);  $M_{Yes}=19.2$  (SD=3.98);  $Mdiff=-.210$ ); and for CHA on educational level ( $F(2,411)=6.48$ ,  $p=.002$ ;  $M_{UG}=14.9$  (SD=4.42);  $M_{BC}=16$  (SD=4.08);  $M_{MS+phd}=16.2$  (SD=4.47); Post-Hoc $_{UG,BC}=-1.369$ ,  $p<.001$ ). For organizational and social variables, results were statistically significant for AUT on employment status ( $t(682)=-4.313$ ,  $p<.001$ ;  $M_{FT}=17.4$  (SD=4.27);  $M_{PT}=18.8$  (SD=3.67);  $Mdiff=-1.35$ ), and CLV vs IDV ( $t(737)=3.17$ ,  $p=.002$ ;  $M_{CLV}=18.6$  (SD=4.06);  $M_{IDV}=17.6$  (SD=4.00);  $Mdiff=.963$ ); and for CHA on CLV vs IDV ( $t(737)=3.77$ ,  $p<.001$ ;  $M_{CLV}=16.4$  (SD=4.21);  $M_{IDV}=15.1$  (SD=4.34);  $Mdiff=1.221$ ). No differences were found in company type or size. Hierarchical multiple regressions were performed with the personal and family variables entered as a first block (model 1) and the organizational and social variables entered as a second block (model 2). Concerning AUT, results indicated that both model 1 ( $R^2=.036$ ;  $Adj. R^2=.027$ ;  $F(5,590)=4.34$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and model 2 ( $R^2=.063$ ;  $Adj. R^2=.047$ ;  $F(10,585)=3.92$ ,  $p<.001$ ) are statistically significant. The difference between models is  $\Delta R^2=.027$ ;  $F(5,585)=3.41$ ,  $p=.005$ . In the first model, gender ( $\beta=.839$ ;  $CI=[.162;1.51]$ ;  $t=2.43$ ,  $p=.015$ ) and career stage ( $\beta=-.50$ ;  $CI=[-.99;-.01]$ ;  $t=-2.00$ ,  $p=.045$ ) impact the desire for AUT. In the second model, gender ( $\beta=-.776$ ;  $CI=[.095;1.46]$ ;  $t=2.24$ ,  $p=.026$ ), employment status ( $\beta=1.04$ ;  $CI=[.280;1.79]$ ;  $t=2.68$ ,  $p=.007$ ), and IDV vs CLV ( $\beta=-1.15$ ;  $CI=[-1.83;-.465]$ ;  $t=-3.30$ ,  $p=.001$ ) affect the desire for AUT.

Regarding BAL, results indicated that both model 1 ( $R^2=.042$ ;  $Adj. R^2=.034$ ;  $F(5,590)=5.20$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and model 2 ( $R^2=.050$ ;  $Adj. R^2=.034$ ;  $F(10,585)=3.10$ ,  $p<.001$ ) are statistically significant. The difference between models is  $\Delta R^2=.008$ ;  $F(5,585)=1.01$ ,  $p=.409$ . Both, in the first model ( $\beta=.381$ ;  $CI=[.148;.613]$ ;  $t=3.212$ ,  $p=.001$ ), and in the second model ( $\beta=.384$ ;  $CI=[.150;.617]$ ;  $t=3.228$ ,  $p=.001$ ), only having children had an impact on the desire for BAL. For CHA, results indicated that both model 1 ( $R^2=.027$ ;  $Adj. R^2=.0189$ ;  $F(5,590)=3.28$ ,  $p=.006$ ) and model 2 ( $R^2=.048$ ;  $Adj. R^2=.032$ ;  $F(10,585)=2.94$ ,  $p<.001$ ) are statistically significant. In the first model, gender ( $\beta=-.0177$ ;  $CI=[-.318;.035]$ ;  $t=-2.45$ ,  $p=.015$ ) and educational level ( $\beta=.165$ ;  $CI=[.069;.261]$ ;  $t=3.38$ ,  $p<.001$ ) have an impact on the desire for AUT. In the second model, gender ( $\beta=-.0180$ ;  $CI=[-.322;-.037]$ ;  $t=-2.47$ ,  $p=.014$ ), educational level ( $\beta=.154$ ;  $CI=[.055;.253]$ ;  $t=-3.05$ ,  $p=.002$ ) and IDV vs CLV ( $\beta=-.218$ ;  $CI=[-.110;.213]$ ;  $t=-2.99$ ,  $p=.003$ ) affect the desire for CHA.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study was to analyze the impact of personal, family, organizational, and social variables on SCB, and to explore groups differences on these variables. In general, results are consistent across the different analyses. Personal variables of gender and career stage, and organizational and social variables of employment status and IDV vs. CLV predict the desire for AUT. It is women aged 35-44, working part-time, in collectivist cultures, who most value the alignment between their own values and those of the organization they work for. These results are congruent with those obtained in Sullivan et al., (2009), in which women with higher educational levels in the 35-44 age range sought greater AUT. Having children most determines the need for BAL between professional and non-professional activities. Other variables, such as being in the 18-24 age range, being married, and having a master's/doctoral degree also seem to be important factors, although in this study they were not predictors. This result is similar to previous studies (e.g., Sullivan et al., 2009), in which married workers and those with children had higher BAL needs, but are quite distinct from those in Sullivan & Mainiero (2008), in which mid-career women sought BAL regardless of marriage or children. Regarding CHA, gender, education, and culture were predictors, and in general it is men with masters or PhDs and living in collectivist societies who are most in need of career stimulation and progression opportunities. Previous studies also found a strong impact of higher educational levels on CHA-seeking despite gender, but it is important to note the study by Elley-Brown, Pringle, and Harris (2018) which found that women, particularly in their early and mid-career, seek strong involvement in their careers by seizing opportunities to achieve career goals and progress their careers (p. 179). As mentioned, most studies focused on workers in traditional career paths in the U.S., omitting a number of relevant personal, structural, and contextual variables. This study provides insights on how new variables may impact SCB in European workers in flexible arrangements. This knowledge can support leaders in reviewing their policies and practices for managing the careers of their employees.

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