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Assessing the Psychometric Properties of the Protean Career Attitude Scale in Korean Business Context

Young-Ho Park[1], Jin-Gu Lee[2], Hyung-Joon Yoon[3]

Abstract

Modern society requires individuals to manage their own career in a more self-directed way to ensure their employability in a rapidly changing society. This new trend has been called "protean career" and refers to a career driven by the individual, not by the organization. This study attempts to provide evidence of the existence of a protean career and its appropriateness in the Korean research setting by employing the previously validated Protean Career Attitude Scale. Also this study investigated the differences in protean attitudes based on various demographic variables. Overall, the present study provides evidence of the construct validity of the Protean Career Attitude Scale measuring two subscales of protean career attitude. Also, this study provides specific information about the differences among various demographic variables. Conclusions were drawn and implications and limitations discussed.

Key words : *Protean career, Confirmatory factor analysis, New career*

I. Introduction

The literature on the changing career environment over the years has been extensive. Traditionally, a career had been defined in terms of the vertical progression in a limited

1) Korea University, Institute of Educational Research. E-mail: yxp122@korea.ac.kr
2) KT&G, HRD Institute. E-mail: lemtury@naver.com
3) Pennsylvania StateUniversity, Career Development Instructor, E-mail: drmtree@psu.edu

number of organizations. Also, career success had been characterized by increased responsibility and monetary rewards within the organization(Hall & Mirvis, 1995; Sullivan, 1999). However, the contemporary career is different from the traditional career and reflects a new psychological contract(Hall, 2002). This psychological contract does not refer to the official legal documentation about the job performed by the employee but to the emotional relationship between individual and organization(Hall, 2002). This psychological contract can often be the foundation of the employment arrangement.

Research has found that the new psychological contract underscores the transactional relationship between employers and employees(Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2002). Previous studies demonstrated that the contemporary psychological contract no longer guarantees lifetime employment and stable career advancement(Harrington & Hall, 2007; Mirvis & Hall, 1994). Ian MacNeil(1980, 1985) described this change as going from a "relational" career contract to a "transactional" one. Recently, much interest in this new psychological contract in the career research field has emerged(Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009; DeMeuse & Tornow, 1990; Hall 2004; Hall & Mirvis, 1995; Kotter, 1995; Mirvis & Hall, 1994; Rousseau, 1990; Stroh et al., 1994).

Furthermore, scholars researching career development also have discussed how the new career contract focuses on the individual's responsibility in managing his/her career. In other words, modern society requires individuals to manage their own career in a more self-directed way to ensure their employability in a rapidly changing society(Hall, 2002; Hall & Moss, 1998). This new trend has been called "protean career" and refers to a career driven by the individual, not by the organization(Briscoe & Hall, 2002). The protean career concept provides a valid approach to understanding the contemporary career(Hall & Moss, 1998) and has been discussed for about three decades in the career-research field.

Despite the fact that the protean career perspective has received widespread attention in the academic literature, little research has been conducted(Briscoe et al., 2006). Empirical evidence is especially scarce about the internal structure of the protean career concept. Also, very limited empirical studies on the protean career have been conducted in a Korean setting. However, a scale(the Protean Career Attitude Scale) for measuring an individual's protean career attitude was developed and initially validated in a U.S. setting. It is expected that scholars may study the protean career empirically using this scale in various research settings. Also, it is expected that Korean Human Resource Development (HRD) scholars may examine the psychometric properties of this scale for studying the existence of a protean career attitude in Korean business settings. Therefore, the present research attempts to check whether the proposed Korean version of the Protean Career Attitude Scale is a reliable measure of the proposed two dimensions of career attitude. Also this study aims to examine. The differences in protean career attitude in terms of their demographic distinctions including gender, age, education, work experience, and industry For the purpose of this research, we will start explaining the protean career concept by describing its basic assumptions and giving an explanation of the Protean

Career Attitude Scale. Hereafter, the discussion of the career competencies required in the modern career era and the implied continuous learning will attempt to explain this protean career concept more comprehensively. Also, the relationships between protean career and demographic variables will be addressed in the following steps of the analysis.

II. Literature Review

1. The Protean Career and Protean Career Attitude Scale

In the contemporary career environment, career attitudes and behaviors have shifted from the organizational career, in which the organization is the primary career driver, to the protean career, in which the individual has the responsibility for managing his/her career. In other words, protean career means decoupling the concept of career from its relationship to a limited number of organizations and from the ideal of secure, lifelong employment(Hall & Mirvis, 1995). If in the old organizational model the career contract was with the organization, in the new protean career the contract is with the self(Mirvis & Hall, 1994). The individual's responsibility is underscored in the protean career concept.

Concerning the protean career concept, three basic assumptions have been addressed. First, the individual's continuous learning in the workplace is a critical factor for enhancing his/her protean career attitude. According to Hall(2002, 2004), a contemporary career is composed of a lifelong series of short learning stages, and this continuous learning is considered one of the best individual strategies for managing a career. The importance of continuous learning will be addressed later in this study. Second, the goal of the protean career is subjective(psychological) career success. Because the protean career contract discusses the agreement with an individual's own self and calling, his/her value is the main criterion for career success. Shepard(1984) characterized the application of these psychological career success criteria as movement along a "path with a heart." Third, with the protean career attitude, the individual's responsibility is imperative in managing the career. Previous studies about the protean career have argued that the modern career has to be driven by the individual, not the organization.

For the purpose of measuring an individual's protean career attitude, the Protean Career Attitude Scale was developed by Briscoe and Hall(2002). For constructing the scale, they built a model for the protean career that includes both 1)a value-driven attitude and 2)a self-directed attitude toward career management. Based on that model, the Protean Career Attitude Scale was composed of two sub-categories, including a

Self-Directed Career Management Scale(assessing self-directed career management behavior) and a Value-Driven Scale(measuring the value-driven predisposition). This Protean Career Attitude Scale has been used recently in various research settings based on various national backgrounds; therefore, this study will investigate the validity of the scale in Korean business settings. This validation of the Protean Career Attitude Scale may arouse interest in the protean career in the Korean academic world. Regarding the scale, the following was tested in this study:

Research Question #1 : Is the proposed Korean version of the Protean Career Attitude Scale a reliable measure of the proposed two dimensions of career attitude?

2. Career Metacompetencies: Identity and Adaptability

To realize the potential of the protean career in the workplace, an individual must develop competencies related to career management(Hall & Moss, 1998). Regarding such competencies, Hall(2002) identified two identity and adaptability(defined below) that are foundational for assessing the individual's employability and potential to be a life-long learner. According to Hall, mastering these two competencies will provide an individual with the ability to master other specific competencies. So Hall called these two competencies "career metacompetencies." Research literature has argued that the protean career is based on the continuous learning about self and workplace; therefore, the individual must learn how to develop these career metacompetencies(Hall, 2002; Kegan, 1994). Previous studies have suggested that these two metacompetencies are the keys for career success in modern society(Howard & Bray, 1988; London, 1983; London & Mone, 1987; McCarthy et al., 2005).

From the individual's perspective, career development can be understood by continuing the quest for what one truly is and wants to do. Actually, Hall(2002) discussed that individuals can discover their own personal identity(Who am I?) through the work identity(What do you want to do?). Scholars have shown that career development occurs when the social role that each individual occupies grows(Hall, 1996). Identity competency(one of the aforementioned career metacompetencies) involves behaviors such as self-assessment, exploring and acting on personal values, engaging in a variety of personal development activities, and being willing to modify self-perceptions as personal qualities and situations change(Hall, 2002).

Regarding adaptability as a career metacompetency, Hall(2002) discussed it not as just an ability but as a combination of components including competence(ability) and motivation. That is, the adaptability might be adaptive competency and adaptive motivation. Adaptability includes behaviors like demonstrating flexibility, openness to new and diverse people and ideas, and eagerness to accept new challenges in unexplored territory. Adaptability without identity can be a mindless reaction to the

environment with no self-direction. Identity changes without adaptability would amount to very self-aware inaction. So, calling on the career metacompetencies of adaptability and identity, an individual may acquire learning skills and create generative change in his/her life(Hall, 2002; Hall & Moss, 1998).

3. Continuous Learning and the Protean Career

One of the keys to understanding the new career contract is understanding that the contemporary employee's needs and career concerns change over the course of the career in a far more dynamic way than in the past(Hall, 1996). The current notion of life and career stages should be understood in the context of rapid change and complexity. Career stages do not function as they did in a more stable organizational environment, as described by Erikson(1963), Levinson et al.(1978), and Super(1992). Rather, a career in this era has been accepted as a series of short learning stages(Hall, 2002). Today, career growth is a process of continuous learning fueled by a combination of the employee, work challenges, relationships, and lifelong learning, which are all required for continued career success(Hall, 1996).

Hall(2002) argued that, instead of one set of career stages covering a whole lifespan (as Super's model[1992] discusses), the contemporary era is now seeing a series of many shorter learning cycles over the span of a person's work life. The modern career-contract concept, the protean career, is firmly based on continuous learning(Hall, 1996; Mirvis & Hall, 1994). Because the life cycle of products and technologies has been so shortened(Handy, 1998), an employee's mastery cycles for those technologies and products have also been shortened during the last few decades. Consequently, an individual's career will increasingly become a series of mini-stages(or a short cycle of learning stages) including exploration, trial, mastery, and exit stages resulting from the process of moving in and out of various technologies, organizations, and work environments(Hall, 2004).

4. Protean Career and Demographic Variables

In this study, several demographic variables gender, age, education, work experience, and industry were included for identifying the differences in perceiving the protean career among demographic groups. Several studies(e.g. Briscoe et al., 2006; Eby, et al., 2003; Sullivan, 1999; Park, 2009; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006) addressed the need to investigate the effect of such demographic variables as gender, age, education level, and other individual differences on the protean career.

Even though not much empirical evidence exists about the influence of demographic variables on the protean career, it might be meaningful to investigate them to understand the protean career more comprehensively. Though there is little research evidence about gender difference in perceiving protean career, several studies discussed the difference between men and women in protean career attitude. For example, Inceoglu et al.(2008) found that women were more motivated by personal principles than men. Mainiero and Sullivan(2005) also found that the meaningful difference between male and female in self-directed career management.

Historically, the relationship between age and career issues has been addressed for several decades(Erikson, 1963; Levinson, 1986; Super, 1992). Regarding the relationship between age and protean career, Harrington and Hall(2007) discussed how pursuing the protean career may be more difficult for older employees than younger ones. Furthermore, Segers et al.(2008) found that age is a significant factor in explaining the protean career. However, several other studies showed different results for the influence of the age variable on the protean career(Briscoe et al., 2009; Park, 2009). This study will examine that discrepancy. For other demographic variables, including education, work experience, and industry, Segers et al.(2008) found they exercised a significant influence on the protean career. However, as with other demographic variables, there is not much empirical evidence of those variables' influence on the protean career. This study may help close that gap in the academic field. The following will be tested in this study:

Research Question #2 : What are the differences in protean career attitude in terms of their demographic distinctions including gender, age, education, work experience, and industry?

III. Research Method

1. Sample

The research sample of this study was drawn from employees in three Korean companies: two in the manufacturing industry and one in the financial. The primary reasons for selecting these companies were based on the industry structure and specific characteristics of financial and manufacturing industries in Korea. The portion of the two industries covers the majority of the business companies. Also, financial and manufacturing industries in Korea are characterized by rapid change with fierce competition among global competitors. To collect data, this study used a web survey. Web surveys are becoming increasingly popular, as reflected in the growing research on web survey methodology(Couper, 2000;

Couper et al., 2001; Crawford et al., 2001; Dillman, 2007; Porter & Whitcomb, 2007) and empirical studies using web survey methods. The increased use of this data-collecting method is the result of the rapid development of the World Wide Web since the 1990s(Couper, 2000). For this study, 1,107 survey invitation letters were given via e-mail to randomly selected employees of the three organizations.

A total of 560 employees responded to the web survey. Cases having missing values in research variables were excluded in the following analyses. Also, the outliers were identified and excluded for the analyses. According to Schumacker and Lomax(1996), outliers are the cases having scores significantly different from others that may inappropriately influence data. Because outliers can seriously distort statistical tests and do not represent the population, they can be problematic(Hair et al., 1998). After excluding cases with missing data and outliers, the final research data came from 545 cases. The final valid response rate was 49.2%. Specifically, 114 and 178 employees from the two manufacturing companies and 253 individuals from the financial company participated in this study.

The average age of the research participants was 35.7(SD=7.7). In terms of education, 390 participants(71.6%) had bachelor's degrees and 88 participants(16.1%) had some level of graduate education. Furthermore, 433 males(79.4%) and 112 females(20.6%) composed the research sample of this study. The average work experience of the final 545 participants was 8.9 years(SD=8.2). In the research sample, 365(67.0%) participants held non-managerial positions, while 102(18.7%) were managerial and 78(14.3%) were senior managerial positions(including 4 executive level participants).

2. Instruments

1) Protean Career

In the literature review section, we have already mentioned the Protean Career Attitude Scale developed by Briscoe and Hall. This scale was utilized in this study. It is composed of two subsections including scales measuring self-directed attitude and value-driven attitude toward career management. The Protean Career Attitude Scale is composed of 14 items. Of the 14 items determining protean career attitude, eight items pertained to assessing self-directed career management(Self-Directed Career Management Scale; for example, "I am responsible for my success or failure in my career") and six items related to evaluating the protean value-driven predisposition(Value-Driven Scale; for example, "It doesn't matter much to me how other people evaluate the choices I make in my career"). All items used a five-point Likert scale from "to little or no extent" to "to a great extent."

The question items were all written originally in English. Therefore, the research

instruments were translated into Korean by the researcher first. Then, to establish its validity, that translation was checked by two subject-matter experts who have appropriate work and academic experience in the HRD field. Through these steps, the final research instrument was created for this study. The question items showed the appropriate internal consistency for the two subscales of the Protean Career Attitude Scale(Self-Directed Career Management Scale, α = .81; Value-Driven Scale, α = .72).

2) Demographic Variables

To collect the demographic variables including age, gender, education, work experience, and industry, the question items were created for this study. Regarding gender, "1" represented male and "2" represented female. In terms of education, "1" meant high-school graduates and "2" represented a two-year college degree. Also, "3" and "4" represented bachelor and graduate degree, respectively. Regarding the industry variable, "1" represented the manufacturing industry and "2" represented the financial industry. Age and work experience(number of years of working experience) were coded as their numeric values.

3. Analyses

Descriptive and correlation analyses were conducted. Next, a confirmation factor analysis(CFA) was conducted for investigating the first research hypothesis. For testing the second hypothesis, t-test, ANOVA(analysis of variance), and regression analysis were used in this study. SPSS 12.0 and AMOS 18 statistic software packages were used for analyzing results.

IV. Results

As mentioned in the previous section on methodology, to estimate the internal consistency of the items, correlation analysis and scale reliability were assessed. <Table Ⅳ-1>shows the intercorrelations among all of the research variables in this study. Also, descriptive statistics are included in the same table for all research variables. Self-directed career management attitude has several statistically significant low relationships with demographic variables(age, r=.109; gender, r=-.138; work experience, r=.088). Value-driven attitude has also several statistically significant low relationships(age, r=-.109; education, r=.143; work experience, r=-.129; industry, r=.042).

<Table Ⅳ-1> Mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient of research variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. CM a	3.83	.53						
2. VD b	3.44	.56	-.400**					
3. Age	35.74	7.69	-.109*	-.109*				
4. Education	2.99	.65	-.049	-.143**	-.174**			
5. Gender	1.20	.40	-.138**	-.033	-.200**	-.036		
6. Work exp.	8.92	8.20	.088*	-.129**	.872**	-.295**	-.062	
7. Industry	1.46	.78	-.007	-.042*	-.325**	.029	.136**	-.195**

* p<.01;**p<.05, a : Self-directed career management, b : Value-driven

Notes: The point-biserial correlation coefficients were used for Gender and Industry variables; Spearman correlation coefficients were used for Education

<Table Ⅳ-2> presents the results of the CFA to identify the fit indices for the model structure of the Protean Career Attitude Scale measurements. For assessing the fit indices of the model structure between the hypothesized measurement model and that generated from the collected samples, the traditional chi-square(χ^2) statistic and five additional general criterion indices were tested: GFI > 0.90; CFI > 0.90; AGFI > 0.90; RMSEA < 0.70; RMR < 0.05(Byrne, 1998; Hair et al., 2006; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2001). Overall, the indices indicated that the model fit the data well. With regard to the χ^2 statistics, interpretation should be cautious(Schumacker & Lomax, 1996). In fact, the χ^2 statistic is heavily influenced by sample size. Trivial differences often cause the χ^2 to be significant solely in the large sample size(Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Nevertheless, the χ^2 test is sensitive to sample size, and a holistic evaluation of the model needs to consider other fit indices. All estimates of comparative fit indices(GFI, AGFI, CFI) were well above or near 0.90, indicating an acceptable data model fit. Also, the small magnitude of residuals(RMR = 0.03, RMSEA = 0.06) also indicated an appropriate model data fit.

<Table Ⅳ-2>Fit indices for the model structure of the Protean Career Attitude Scale measures

Model	*d.f.*	*χ2*	*GFI*	*CFI*	*AGFI*	*RMR*	*RMSEA*
14 items, two factors	76	256.992***	.94	.90	.92	.03	.06

Notes: ***p<.001

Two independent t-tests were conducted to identify various perspectives in the protean career attitude based on the gender and industry variables. <Table Ⅳ-3> shows the results of the statistically different perspectives. For the self-directed career management attitude, men outperformed the women(p<0.01).There was no significant difference between

the two types of industry. Regarding the value-driven attitude, Individuals in the financial company outperformed the employees at the manufacturing companies($p<0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between men and women.

<Table Ⅳ-3> The results of t-tests for gender and industry variables

		Protean Career Attitude Scale	
		Self-Directed Career	Value-Driven
Gender	Male mean(SD)	3.87(.52)	3.45(.56)
	Female mean(SD)	3.69(.54)	3.40(.55)
	d.f.	543	543
	t-value	3.24**	.774
Industry	Manufacturing(SD)	3.86(.53)	3.38(.58)
	Financial(SD)	3.80(.52)	3.50(.54)
	d.f.	543	543
	t-value	1.218	-2.518*

Notes: *p<.01,**p<.05

ANOVA analysis was conducted based on the education level of the research participants. The results(<Table Ⅳ-4>) show there is no difference among education levels in self-directed career management attitude. However, for value-driven attitude, a statistically significant difference was identified. In particular, the post-hoc test(Tukey post-hoc test) identified that this difference came from those holding a high school diploma and those with a bachelor's or a graduate degree.

<Table Ⅳ-4> ANOVA results for education variable

	High School (SD)	Two-year College (SD)	Bachelor's (SD)	Graduate (SD)	ANOVA	
					F	Sig.
Self-directed career management	3.76(.50)	3.79(.61)	3.84(.52)	3.87(.51)	.432	.730
Value driven	3.16(.57)	3.23(.59)	3.46(.55)	3.51(.54)	4.646	.003

Notes: Tukey post-hoc test identified the following differences: High school < Bachelor; High school < Graduate

To investigate the influence of age and work experience, regression analyses were conducted. Results(<Table Ⅳ-5>) show statistically significant influences of age and work experience on self-directed career management and value-driven attitude. Older and more work-experienced individuals show greater self-directed career management attitude. However, older and more work-experienced employees show less value-driven attitude.

<Table Ⅳ-5> Results of regression analysis for age and work experience variables

Dependent variable	Independent variable	beta	SE	β	t	Sig.
Self-directed career management	Age	-.008	.003	-.109	-2.562	.011
	Work experience	-.006	.003	-.088	-2.057	.040
Value-driven	Age	-.008	.003	-.109	-2.547	.011
	Work experience	-.009	.003	-1.129	-3.034	.003

V. Discussion

This study investigates the evidence of the existence of a protean career attitude and its appropriateness in Korean research settings, validating the Protean Career Attitude Scale and examining the relationships between protean career and demographic variables. Overall, the present study provides evidence of the construct validity of the Protean Career Attitude Scale measuring two subscales of protean career attitude(self-directed career management and value-driven attitude). This study tested a two-factor structure developed and initially validated in the United States(Briscoe & Hall, 2002), confirming that the two-factor structure is well-suited to the collected data from three Korean companies.

Regarding the initial validation of the scale, Briscoe and Hall(2002) built a model for the protean career that includes the two attitudes. Based on that model for the protean career, the Protean Career Attitude Scale was composed of two subcategories, including the Self-Directed Career Management Scale(assessing respondents' self-directed career management behavior) and the Value-Driven Scale(evaluating respondents' value-driven predisposition). This Protean Career Attitude Scale has been used recently in various research settings, and this study marks the initial validation for the Korean version of the scale. Also, this study provides specific information about the differences among various demographic variables.

There are two main conclusions that can be drawn from this study based on the research questions. First, the Protean Career Attitude Scale produces valid scores in a Korean business context. In other words, this research provides the theoretical implication for future studies about measuring individuals' self-directed attitude and value-driven attitude in managing their own careers in Korean business settings. Also, the reliable and valid score of the Protean Career Attitude Scale provides practical implications in a Korean context. Using the scale will be an efficient way for collecting information about individuals' protean career attitude, which is imperative for career success in the modern

career environment. For example, internal human resource professionals may use the measurement results of the Protean Career Attitude Scale for investigating how employees manage their own careers in the workplace. Also, those human resource officials may consider the results when comparing or analyzing career management attitudes of employees in several different business units of their organization.

Second, the results showed several significant differences in both protean career attitudes according to the demographic variables. As shown in the results section, men scored higher than women in self-directed career management attitude. Also, employees in the study's financial company showed higher scores for value-driven attitude than individuals in the manufacturing companies. Also, the study found that bachelor's degree or graduate degree holders showed a higher value-driven score than those who had only a high school diploma. In other words, university(or higher) degree holders search more for their own value in managing their careers than high school graduates. The results showed age and work experience are all statistically significant factors for both self-directed career management attitude and value-driven attitude.

Theoretically, the above results provide a little different information than what was drawn from previous studies conducted in a similar Korean business context(e.g. Park, 2009). Therefore, this study may lay the foundation for future research investigating those differences. Practically, the results of this study may provide a useful strategy to human resource professionals for managing employees' career attitude based on their own demographic backgrounds. That is, human resource officials had better consider individual demographic backgrounds in preparing career-development strategy, because there are different levels of career attitude based on different demographic backgrounds.

Even though there are several implications for theory and practice, this study also has limitations. First of all, this exploratory study showed several differences in both protean career attitudes according to the demographic variables; specific reasons or descriptions for those differences will be needed in future studies. A more comprehensive approach in comparing the results from several studies regarding the differences in protean career attitudes may also be required in future studies. Also, although the sample size in this study was relatively large, more diverse samples from several organizations are needed to examine protean career attitudes more deeply in a Korean context. This sampling limitation is related to the generalization of the results of this study; therefore, future studies may need to draw from a more diverse research sample.

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국문요약

국내 기업환경을 대상으로 한 프로틴경력 태도 척도에 관한 적합성 연구

박용호, 이진구, 윤형준

현대의 경력환경은 경력개발에 대해서 개인들이 자기주도적으로 자신들의 고용가능성을 증대하는 방향으로 스스로를 개발하도록 요구하고 있다. 특히 이러한 환경 속에서 경력개발에 대한 개인들의 책임이 강조되고 있는데, 이러한 개인의 책임을 강조하는 새로운 형태의 경력을 '프로틴경력'이라고 한다. 프로틴경력은 경력개발의 주체가 조직이 아닌 개인이 됨을 강조하는 개념으로써 약 30여 년간 경력연구분야에서 논의되고 있는 개념이다. 본 연구는 이미 프로틴경력을 측정하기 위해 개발되어진 '프로틴경력 태도 척도'에 대한 국내 기업환경에서의 적합성을 살펴보고자 한다. 기존의 다른 연구환경에서는 이미 '프로틴경력 태도 척도'가 2개의 하위 요인들로 구성되는 것으로 밝혀졌는데, 이러한 구조에 대한 국내 기업환경의 타당화 연구를 진행하였으며, 또한 연구참여자들의 개인 배경변인에 따른 프로틴경력 태도에서의 차이 또한 파악하고자 하였다. 연구결과는 기존의 2개 하위 요인으로 구성된 '프로틴경력 태도 척도'의 구조가 국내 기업환경에도 적합함을 보여주었으며, 일부 개인 배경변인에 따라 개인들이 인지하는 자신들의 프로틴경력 태도에는 차이가 있음을 확인할 수 있었다.

핵심 되는 말: 프로틴 경력, 확인적 요인 분석, 경력개발