Received: 19 April 2019 | Revised: 30 May 2020 | Accepted: 2 June 2020

DOI: 10.1111/peps.12412

PERSONNEL PSYCHOLOGY WILEY

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Personal brand equity: Scale development and validation

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Abstract

Crafting a personal brand has become an important factor for career success. Despite the growing literature on topics associated with personal brands, the conceptualization and measurement of *personal brand equity* (PBE) have received little attention. By drawing upon and integrating the marketing and careers literatures on branding, we reconceptualized the definition of PBE and delineated its dimensions and conceptual boundaries. Furthermore, we developed a 12-item scale to measure PBE. Among seven different samples (total $N = 3{,}273$), including two samples of employees, this study tested the construct and criterion-related validity of the PBE scale. First, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses supported a three-dimensional structure of PBE (brand appeal, brand differentiation, and brand recognition). In two samples, the convergent and discriminant validity of the PBE scale was established. Finally, this study showed that PBE predicts perceived employability, career success, and job performance. The PBE scale offers new opportunities to understand and measure career behaviors by considering individuals' personal brand positioning.

KEYWORDS
career success, personal brand, personal branding, personal brand equity (PBE), self-presentation

Personal branding has become an important career tactic for contemporary workers (for review, see Gorbatov, Khapova, & Lysova, 2018). To be successful in the competitive world of employment, individuals are pressured to adopt personal responsibility for their careers (Arthur, Khapova, & Richardson, 2017) and learn the craft of staying employable. An important factor for job and career success is standing out from the competition in terms of professional and personal qualities (Harris & Rae, 2011; Pagis & Ailon, 2017; Rangarajan, Gelb, & Vandaveer, 2017). By adopting such a consumer-oriented outlook toward one's professional image, individuals can proactively manage their job and career success (Gandini, 2016; Vallas & Cummins, 2015). Indeed, promoting the professional self to develop greater personal brand equity (PBE), or "the aggregation of all the attitudes and behavior patterns of the brand's stakeholders" (Bendisch, Larsen, & Trueman, 2013, p. 606), has become a career reality if not a career necessity (Gandini, 2016). Not proactively managing one's career may have deleterious effects, including lower employability and job performance (Crant, 2000; Hall, 2004; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001).

The fact that individuals increasingly craft personal brands is well documented in the practitioner literature (Clark, 2011; Montoya & Vandehey, 2002; Peters, 1997). However, thus far, the scholarly literature has largely ignored this topic. Indeed, Gorbatov et al. (2018) note that while a search for "personal brand*" on Amazon.com returns over 300,000 results, only 100 relevant scholarly articles exist in academic databases when a search is conducted using the same phrase. Moreover, most of these scholarly articles are either conceptual (Bendisch et al., 2013; Bridgen, 2011; Hearn, 2008) or qualitative (Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017; Parmentier, Fischer, & Reuber, 2013; Tarnovskaya, 2017). Evans (2017) pointed out that "there has been virtually no empirical analysis of brand equity measures from a self-branding perspective" (p. 304). Hence, there is a clear need for more quantitative research on the topic.

Despite the previous research efforts, there is no consensus on how to define PBE. This is an obstacle for conducting empirical studies. Bendisch et al.'s (2013, p. 606) definition of PBE as "the aggregation of all the attitudes and behavior patterns of the brand's stakeholders," relates to the personal brands of CEOs and lacks the specificity that would enable PBE to be distinguished from other constructs in the same nomological field (Suddaby, 2010). Furthermore, to propel the research in this area, a reliable and valid measure of PBE is needed. There have been some attempts to measure constructs related to PBE, including professor brand equity (Jillapalli & Jillapalli, 2014), personal branding and personal brand performance (Kucharska & Mikołajczak, 2018), a business CEO's personal brand (Chen & Chung, 2016), and athlete brands (Arai, Ko, & Kaplanidou, 2013). However, these scales lack either generalizability (they are too context-specific) or methodological rigor (they fail to meet several established scale development standards).

In this paper, we make three essential theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature on personal branding. First, to advance contemporary career research, we draw on the marketing literature (J. L. Aaker, 1997; Keller, 1993) to formulate a definition of PBE that encompasses three underlying dimensions: brand appeal, brand differentiation, and brand recognition. Second, we answer calls for more empirical research on personal brands (e.g., Evans, 2017; Shepherd, 2005) by providing a reliable scale to measure the strengths of one's personal brand. We test the validity of this scale in different cultural contexts and samples (students and employees), which illustrates the scale's generalizability across varying populations. Moreover, we show that PBE is related to, but conceptually different from, other established constructs in the self-presentation and career literature (Evans, 2017; Zinko & Rubin, 2015). Third, we are the first to empirically demonstrate the importance of PBE in today's competitive work environment. Specifically, we show that PBE can predict individuals' perceived career success, perceived employability, and job performance (i.e., self-rated and other-rated) over and above other established career- and job-related constructs.

1 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 | Defining personal brand equity

The PBE concept's roots lie in the marketing literature that has established that a product's brand equity is the outcome of the process of creating and positioning a product's brand and is reflected in consumers' familiarity and

perception of the brand (D. A. Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993, 2001; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). In the marketing field, the concept of brand equity can be approached from two perspectives: a financial and a consumer (or customer) perspective. From a financial perspective, brand equity is the value of the brand. This is similar to the concept of financial equity, which refers to the difference between the value of assets and the value of liabilities (Simon & Sullivan, 1993). From the customer perspective (the perspective that this study builds on), brand equity is a brand's value (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003; Schultz, 2016), which resides in being familiar with a brand and holding "favorable, strong, and unique brand associations in memory" (Keller, 1993, p. 2). Keller and Lehmann (2006) considered customer-based brand equity as "part of the attraction to—or repulsion from—a particular product […] generated by the 'nonobjective' part of the product offering and not by the product attributes per se" (p. 754). Thus, a brand may have attributes and associations that are detached from the product itself and malleable depending on the target audiences' needs.

Applying the branding principles to individuals, marketing scholars have studied the concept of a *human brand*, or "any well-known persona who is the subject of marketing communications efforts" (Thomson, 2006, p. 104). This spurred a stream of research on people as brands, exploring the human brands of, for instance, academics (Close, Moulard, & Monroe, 2011), celebrities (Moulard, Garrity, & Rice, 2015), and politicians (Speed, Butler, & Collins, 2015). However, this research only looked at select professional domains, while the agentic nature of personal branding indicates that anyone can construct a personal brand (Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005; Shepherd, 2005).

It is not surprising that the careers literature has adopted the idea of people as brands. In fact, in the context of increasingly flexible employment relationships, managing a personal brand has become a necessity for individuals to promote themselves. The careers literature defines a personal brand as "a set of characteristics of an individual (e.g., attributes, values, and beliefs) rendered into a differentiated narrative and imagery with the intent of establishing a competitive advantage in the minds of the target audience" (Gorbatov et al., 2018, p. 6). Although this definition allows studying personal brands from a contemporary careers perspective (Arthur et al., 2017), it does not capture the equity component of a personal brand. To be able to examine the effects of PBE on individuals' career success and related criteria, PBE needs to be conceptualized in terms of the perceived value of one's personal brand, which is its equity.

Therefore, we reconceptualized PBE following Keller's (1993) conceptualization of brand equity that comprises three dimensions: *consumer response to marketing*, *differential effect*, and *brand knowledge*. Extending the marketing brand theory to personal branding, we relabeled Keller's dimensions. The first dimension, a consumer's response to marketing, refers to the favorability of the reactions (i.e., perceptions, preferences, or behaviors) toward the brand, and, thus, resembles the extent to which the features and characteristics of a personal brand are appealing. Hence, we relabeled this dimension *brand appeal*. As marketers strive to elicit a positive response from consumers to product stimuli (consumer response to marketing; Keller, 1993), individuals must emphasize the various traits and attitudes that they want others to associate with their brand (J. L. Aaker, 1997). The personal branding research shows that in their attempts to increase their PBE, individuals develop brand appeal based on the needs and preferences of their distinct target audiences by emphasizing certain features and characteristics. These include, for example, friendliness (Pagis & Ailon, 2017) or trying to come across as audience-oriented and networking (Hedman, 2017).

The second dimension, differential effect, indicates the extent to which the product stands out compared to other products. Thus, within the context of personal branding, the differential effect indicates how much one's professional value is superior to others. Therefore, this dimension was relabeled *brand differentiation*. It concerns the perceived superior benefits associated with the person's work, and the strength of one's PBE depends on the degree of differentiation of such benefits (Evans, 2017). Keller (1993) viewed the differential effect of a brand as the consumer's response to a branded versus fictitiously named or an unbranded version of a product. An effective personal brand possesses distinctive features and a sense of uniqueness (Pagis & Ailon, 2017). Such differentiation makes a personal brand competitive, ensuring greater advantages in a competitive labor market to achieve goals such as landing a job, being asked to participate in a project, or receiving a promotion (Parmentier et al., 2013).

The last dimension, brand knowledge, refers to the descriptive and evaluative brand-related information that is stored in one's memory. Within the context of personal branding, this dimension is akin to being recognized in one's professional field. Hence, this dimension was relabeled *brand recognition*. This dimension relates to the perception of

the salience of one's personal brand regarding an industry, type of work, or service. In marketing, brand recognition is conceptualized as the ease of recognition and recall of a certain brand in the minds of the target audience (Keller, 1993). Hoeffler and Keller (2003) argued that increasing brand recognition should be a priority in brand building as consumers are more attentive to familiar brands. By proactively providing a sense of one's own appealing and superior professional offer to a wide array of relevant others, individuals increase the salience and outreach of their personal brand.

These three dimensions of PBE align with the competency-based view of careers (Arthur, Claman, & DeFillippi, 1995). This view suggests that throughout their career, individuals develop three career competencies: knowing-why, knowing-how, and knowing-whom (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Guan, Arthur, Khapova, Hall, & Lord, 2019). Knowing-why captures an answer to the question of *why do I work* and refers to personal motivation, values, and identity. Knowing-how captures an answer to the question of *how do I work* and refers to skills, competencies, and unique ways of working. In turn, knowing-whom captures an answer to the question *with whom do I work* and refers to professional connections and networks (Arthur et al., 2017). Labeled as an "intelligent career" framework (Parker, Khapova, & Arthur, 2009), this perspective builds on the resource-based view of careers (Inkson & Clark, 2010) as a conceptual extension of the resource-based view of a firm (Barney, 1991). It suggests that careers can also be defined as dynamic "repositories of knowledge" (Bird, 1996, p. 150). From this perspective, careers can be viewed as entailing the competitive dynamics of resource acquisition and utilization, and resource characteristics such as rarity and inimitability (Inkson & Clark, 2010).

Linking the competency-based view of careers to PBE, in this paper, we posit that knowing-why informs the desired professional identity and image (i.e., *brand appeal*), knowing-how enables the individual to establish the points of parity and points of differentiation in a professional field (Parmentier et al., 2013) (i.e., *brand differentiation*), while knowing-whom enables the communication and engagement strategy to bolster recognizability in that field (i.e., *brand recognition*). Thus, our PBE conceptualization is consistent with related career frameworks entailing three attributes with similar and/or related meanings, which further emphasizes the value of the PBE construct for the careers literature.

Therefore, building on the marketing and careers literatures, we define PBE as "an individual's perception of the value of one's personal brand derived from its appeal, differentiation, and recognition in a given professional field." Together, these three dimensions capture the essence of PBE and explain how the perception of the value of one's personal brand is created through appealing features and characteristics (brand appeal), superior professional benefits (brand differentiation), and outreach and awareness (brand recognition). It is expected that these three subdimensions are correlated yet distinguishable, similar to the brand equity factors of product brands (Washburn & Plank, 2002; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). On the one hand, the strategic nature of the personal branding process should ensure that the three PBE subdimensions are balanced. For instance, if an individual perceives their personal brand as appealing and differentiated, they are also more likely to be more recognizable in their professional area. On the other hand, the three PBE subdimensions tap into the different attributes of PBE. As explained above, brand appeal concerns the positive reaction toward the brand, brand differentiation concerns the positioning vis-à-vis the competition, and brand recognition relates to the salience and outreach of the personal brand. As previous research has shown that individuals are generally accurate perceivers of their social status (Anderson, Srivastava, Beer, Spataro, & Chatman, 2006), a construct from the same nomological field as PBE, we assert that self-reports can accurately measure an individual's perception of the value of their personal brand.

1.2 | Relevance of personal brand equity in different occupations

Personal branding has been recognized as an important career competence to achieve success in the contemporary work environment. The studies on personal branding have been conducted on various populations, including CEOs (Bendisch et al., 2013; Fetscherin, 2015), sportspeople (Dumont & Ots, 2020; Lobpries, Bennett, & Brison, 2018), politicians (Speed et al., 2015), journalists (Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017; Vallas & Christin, 2018),

nurses (Trepanier & Gooch, 2014), gig workers (Gandini, 2016), and creatives (Scolere, Pruchniewska, & Duffy, 2018). Although there is also some research on nonprofessional occupational groups, such as sex workers (Cunningham et al., 2017; Phua & Caras, 2008), there is not enough evidence to claim that the concept of PBE would equally apply to those occupational groups. Thus, while PBE can be applied to a wide range of worker populations, white-collar or gig workers would probably benefit more from PBE than, for instance, blue-collar employees.

There is also evidence that PBE starts developing at very early career stages. Several universities offer personal branding assignments to undergraduate students (Edmiston, 2014; Robson, 2019; Tymon, Harrison, & Batistic, 2019). For instance, Tymon et al. (2019) described class assignments requiring students to deliver a "brand me" presentation, while McCorkle and McCorkle (2012) reported on a personal branding assignment that involved creating a LinkedIn account. Aside from specific personal branding assignments, students have ample other opportunities to increase their human capital, including studying, participating in extracurricular activities, or taking up part-time employment (Donald, Baruch, & Ashleigh, 2017). Indeed, Manai and Holmlund (2015) found that students engage in a wide range of self-marketing activities. Often, such personal branding assignments and activities require students to reflect on their professional strengths and their relative value in the labor market. Tymon et al. (2019) showed that such assignments and activities could increase students' employability-related self-confidence.

1.3 | Personal brand equity and related constructs

To contextualize PBE in relation to other constructs, we first considered the self-presentation literature (Goffman, 1956; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Meyrowitz, 1990). Zinko and Rubin (2015) provided an overview of the constructs that have been studied in the self-presentation literature: reputation, status, image, fame, celebrity, pedigree, legitimacy, credibility, branding, and impression management.

Reflecting on constructs such as fame, celebrity, and pedigree, we argue that they are closely related to the brand recognition dimension of PBE. However, these constructs can only be applied to a very narrow category of workers at higher job levels, such as CEOs (Bendisch et al., 2013; Cottan-Nir & Lehman-Wilzig, 2018). In contrast, PBE offers broader application possibilities across job levels, functions, and industries. This includes, for instance, self-employed workers (Gandini, 2016), and academics (Noble, Bentley, Campbell, & Singh, 2010; Paivi & Back, 2017; Van Noorden, 2014) as well as precarious (Vallas & Christin, 2018; Vallas & Cummins, 2015) or stigmatized (Cunningham et al., 2017; Phua & Caras, 2008) employees. Therefore, we posit that concepts such as popularity, admiration, and prestige are more appropriate for the workplace context rather than fame, celebrity, and pedigree.

Popularity, admiration, and prestige highlight the same qualities of being known to others, and exhibiting positive effects and can pertain to anyone, irrespective of organizational and social hierarchies. Popularity in the professional setting is understood as "being generally accepted by one's peers" (Scott & Judge, 2009, p. 21), admiration refers to "an emotion elicited by individuals of competence exceeding standards" (Onu, Kessler, & Smith, 2016, p. 2), and prestige is defined as the "social rank that is granted to individuals who are recognized and respected for their skills, success, or knowledge" (Cheng, Tracy, Foulsham, Kingstone, & Henrich, 2013, p. 105). Acceptance or being known are only some of the facets of the PBE construct, and the concept of popularity does not fully cover the idea of delivering value or differentiation, which are central to a strong personal brand. Admiration is similar to PBE in conveying the idea of standing out and having differentiated value. However, admiration is an emotion, whereas PBE, in addition to emotional factors, also includes cognitive and attitudinal factors. Further, admiration presupposes a degree of elation or adoration—qualities that are not necessarily associated with PBE. Prestige is concerned with attaining a higher social rank, while, on the other hand, PBE is not necessarily related to social hierarchy but rather to visibility in the employment market (Khedher, 2019). Finally, popularity, admiration, and prestige are distinct from PBE because they can exist independently of the individual's actions, whereas constructing a personal brand requires agency (Gorbatov et al., 2018).

The same reasoning applies to reputation, that is, "a perceptual identity formed from the collective perceptions of others" (Zinko, Ferris, Blass, & Laird, 2007, p. 165). PBE is similar in some respects to reputation (Noble et al., 2010; Schlosser, McPhee, & Forsyth, 2017); however, reputation can exist independently of any conscious attempt to manage it while deliberate effort is required to create the desired PBE.

Self-promotion is concerned with highlighting one's "abilities or accomplishments in order to be seen as competent" (Bolino & Turnley, 1999, p. 190). It is another construct that must be considered as PBE can be seen as a specific type of self-presentation behavior. Although PBE and self-promotion overlap significantly, self-promotion does not necessarily capture the differentiated nature of PBE, which requires a strategic approach to projecting one's professional self.

Finally, PBE is also different from dominance, which is defined as the "induction of fear, through intimidation and coercion, to attain social rank" (Cheng et al., 2013, p. 105), and it is a socially constructed perception of the self in the minds of others as a result of self-presentation. However, whereas the goal of PBE is to increase others' perceptions of one's professional value, the goal of dominance is to gain a share of voice or social hierarchy. Although the tactics to obtain these goals differ, the outcomes of PBE and dominance may be similar (e.g., career success: Parmentier et al., 2013; Pratto, Stallworth, Sidanius, & Siers, 1997).

PBE is expected to be positively correlated with all these constructs but also to be distinct from them. Therefore, our first hypothesis is:

***Hypothesis 1*:** PBE is positively related to, but distinct from popularity, admiration, prestige, reputation, self-promotion, and dominance.

There is also some overlap between PBE and personality based on socioanalytic theory, which views personality in two ways: from the position of the actor and the position of the observer (Hogan, 1982; Hogan, Hogan, & Roberts, 1996). Hogan et al. (1996) argued that this latter understanding of personality is most pertinent to the study of self-presentation behaviors. Using the HEXACO model as the conceptual framework for understanding personality (Ashton & Lee, 2005, 2008), we expect that PBE will demonstrate a negative relationship with honesty-humility. Personal branding requires the proactive promotion of the self vis-à-vis the referent group, while individuals scoring high on honesty-humility are less preoccupied with using social relationships for personal gain or promoting the self. Indeed, Bourdage, Wiltshire, and Lee (2015) found a significant negative relationship between self-promotion and honesty-humility. Extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience should be positively related to PBE as people who are more ambitious, confident, organized, and imaginative are more likely to engage in proactive career behaviors related to the design, promotion, and maintenance of their personal brand (Chiaburu, Stoverink, Li, & Zhang, 2015; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). At the same time, the emotionality and agreeableness factors of personality should not relate to PBE because qualities such as being able to adjust, controlling one's temper, or being lenient to others are not associated with one's personal branding effectiveness. Indeed, previous research has shown that emotionality is not correlated with self-promotion (Bourdage et al., 2015). Based on these arguments and the previous empirical findings, we formulated the following hypothesis:

***Hypothesis 2*:** PBE is (a) positively related to extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, and (b) negatively related to honesty-humility.

Considering PBE's specific focus on achieving success in one's career, it should also be related to career achievement aspiration, which is concerned with professional growth and advancement in one's field (Gray & O'Brien, 2007). For example, Gregor and O'Brien (2016) found that young women with high career achievement aspirations prioritized their careers over their partners, giving prominence to recognition in their career and further education. The need for self-esteem and rewards, which in the career context could be understood as, for example, the desire to be among the best in one's field and to obtain promotions in one's organization, has been recognized as a driver of personal

branding behaviors (Gioia, Hamilton, & Patvardhan, 2014; Zinko & Rubin, 2015). Thus, to provide further evidence for the construct validity of the PBE scale, we also tested the relationship between PBE and career achievement aspiration.

Hypothesis 3: PBE is positively related to career achievement aspiration.

1.4 | Personal brand equity, career-related criteria, and job performance

As PBE is a career construct, we expect it to impact several career success indicators, such as subjective career success (e.g., perceived career success), employability, and objective career success (e.g., salary progression) as well as individual job performance. In this paper, we define career success after Arthur, Khapova, and Wilderom (2005) as the "accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time" (p. 179), and it entails both subjective and objective criteria.

Specifically, we expect perceived (or subjective) career success, defined as "appraisals by individuals of their career success" (Wolff & Moser, 2009, p. 197), to be positively related to PBE. By building PBE, an individual engages in a variety of activities to analyze and distill personal and professional qualities to create a desired personal brand and communicate it to the target audience. When individuals understand their personal and professional strengths and limitations, they have clarity of one's professional identity, which is associated with subjective career success (Hall, 2002; Ibarra, 1999). Personal branding activities also presuppose reflexivity and lead to a better understanding of one's professional self, both perceived and desired (Adams, 2003; Wee & Brooks, 2010). Strauss, Griffin, and Parker (2012) found that the clarity of "future work selves" is positively related to engaging in proactive career behaviors, which, in turn, have a positive effect on career success (Crant, 2000). Creating PBE is a proactive career behavior characteristic of individuals with a boundaryless mindset, which is positively related to the self-perception of career success (Guan et al., 2019). Therefore, our fourth hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 4: PBE is positively related to perceived career success.

PBE is also expected to relate to employability, which is defined as "work specific active adaptability that enables workers to identify and realize career opportunities" (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004, p. 16). According to Fugate et al. (2004), employability comprises three components: personal adaptability, career identity, and social and human capital. These three components are closely linked to PBE. First, individuals with stronger PBE signal a higher degree of personal adaptability because personal branding requires agency and proactivity (Gorbatov et al., 2018), and, arguably, those who engage in personal branding are more adaptable to the needs of the ever-changing labor environment. Second, PBE is likely to be related to career identity because, by its virtue, a personal brand "identifies, clarifies, and communicates a professional identity" (Cederberg, 2017, p. 183). Indeed, Brooks and Anumudu (2016) demonstrated how creating one's personal brand leads to the development of a more coherent professional identity. Finally, PBE is positively related to an individual's social and human capital because professional identity is a form of human capital (Becker, 1993). PBE, as a positive image in the minds of others, constitutes an individual's social capital, and the self-promotional activities employed in the creation of that image have been shown to lead to increased employability (Hazer, 2003). Previous studies have already demonstrated that personal branding is positively related to employability (Khedher, 2019; Tymon et al., 2019). Thus, because PBE is the outcome of the personal branding process, it is also likely to be positively related to employability. Taken together, these arguments lead to the following:

Hypothesis 5: PBE is positively related to perceived employability.

Next, it is hypothesized that PBE relates to salary progression, which is one of the indicators of objective career success. The human (Becker, 1993) and social (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001) capital theories of success explain how accumulation of professional knowledge, skills, and experience (i.e., human capital), on the one hand, and information, resources, and sponsorship embedded in one's social network (i.e., social capital), on the other hand, lead to higher earnings. Meta-analytical evidence suggests that social and human capital are significant predictors of an individual's salary (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Ng & Feldman, 2014; Wolff & Moser, 2009). As explained above, having PBE implies having high social and human capital that are important for salary progression. This leads us to believe that PBE is also positively related to salary progression.

Hypothesis 6: PBE is positively related to salary progression.

Finally, we expect PBE to be positively related to both self-rated and other-rated job performance for two reasons. First, the theory of the reflected best self, which is "based on our perceptions of how others view us" (Roberts, Dutton, Spreitzer, Heaphy, & Quinn, 2005, p. 712), illuminates how clarity regarding one's strengths helps individuals perform at their best and realize their professional potential. PBE, as an outcome of personal branding, is a product of the internal work of reflecting on one's personal strengths and the external work of positioning the professional self on the labor maker. Roberts et al. (2005) argue that the internal work of defining the reflected best self and comparing it to multiple possible selves, which is part of the personal branding process, leads to optimal functioning at work. Hence, higher PBE is likely to be associated with higher evaluations of one's performance.

Second, socioanalytic theory posits that job performance is evaluated through the lens of "rewardingness" or meeting the supervisor's performance expectations (Hogan & Shelton, 1998, p. 135). Therefore, performance evaluations are often influenced by how employees are seen by others (Bolino, Long, & Turnley, 2016). Indeed, there is substantive evidence that self-presentation behaviors have a positive impact on job performance ratings (Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi, 2009). For instance, Hochwarter, Ferris, Zinko, Arnell, and James (2007) found that reputation was positively related to performance ratings, while Wayne and Liden (1995) demonstrated how impression management had a positive effect on performance ratings through the supervisor's liking of the subordinate and the supervisor's perceptions of his or her similarity to the subordinate. PBE is a type of self-presentation behavior that is focused on shaping others' perceptions of one's professional and personal qualities and belongs to the same nomological field as concepts such as impression management and reputation. Consequently, PBE is likely to be associated with other-rated performance.

Hypothesis 7: PBE is positively related to (a) self-rated and (b) other-rated job performance.

2 | PRESENT STUDY

In this paper, we aim to develop a reliable and valid measure of PBE that could advance the research in the field. We followed established procedures for construct measurement and validation (DeVellis, 2012; Hinkin, 1998; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011). Based on the PBE definition, in Phase 1, we generated a pool of potential items that was reviewed by a panel of experts for its face and content validity. In Phase 2, we factor-analyzed the new 12-item scale and tested its reliability and stability. In Phase 3, we examined the psychometric properties of the new scale, and in Phase 4, we assessed the convergent and discriminant validity of the PBE scale. Finally, in Phase 5, we established the criterion-related validity of the PBE scale. Table 1 presents an overview of the samples and the key demographic details, together with the key measured variables. For this study, we performed the online ethics self-assessment of the School of Business and Economics, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Based on the outcome of this self-assessment, no further ethical screening was required. All studies were carried out in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, and the European Union General Data Protection Regulation. Furthermore, we obtained informed consent from all study participants.

TABLE 1 Overview of the study samples and their key demographic characteristics

Sample	Description	Key demographics	Employment status	Measures collected
1	Prolific, employed population.	$N = 707$; $M_{age} = 37.91$ ($SD = 10.28$); female (%) = 52.5; 55.3 the UK, 19.8 the USA, 3.8 Canada.	678 (95.9%) employed at an organization	36 items from the original pool
2	MTurk, general population.	$N = 1{,}017$; $M_{age} = 32.69$ ($SD = 10.00$); female (%) = 46.9; 54.8 the USA, 32.2 India; 2.5 Canada.	810 (79.6%): employed full-time; 149 (14.7%): part-time; the rest are unemployed or retired	36 items from the original pool
3	Convenience sample. This sample was used for another study, so the measure of PBE was collected for this paper's psychometric analyses.	$N = 263$; $M_{age} = 27.25$ ($SD = 9.49$); female (%) = 58.6; 71.9 Dutch, 23.2 Chinese.	120 (45.6%): employed part-time; 79 (30%): full-time; 39 (14.8%): not employed and not looking for work; and 22 (8.4%): not employed but looking for work	PBE
4	Student sample, large public university in the Netherlands; 2-week time lag.	T1: $N = 278$; $M_{age} = 19.53$ ($SD = 1.43$); female (%) = 30.9; 86.3 Dutch. T2: $N = 247$; $M_{age} = 19.53$ ($SD = 1.46$); female (%) = 32.8; 86.6 Dutch.	Students. Work experience (in years): $M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.45$ at T1 and $M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.92$ at T2.	PBE, career achievement aspiration, perceived employability, career self-efficacy, self-promotion, popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, admiration, personality

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Sample	Description	Key demographics	Employment status	Measures collected
5	MTurk, employed; 6-week time lag.	T1: $N = 603$; $M_{age} = 37.81$ ($SD = 10.13$); female (%) = 44.8; 90.5 USA, 6.0 India. T2: $N = 349$; $M_{age} = 38.44$ ($SD = 10.41$); Female (%) = 45.3; 88.8 USA, 7.4 India.	All full-time employed. 96.5% with 3 years of work experiences or more.	PBE, perceived employability, perceived career success, job performance, self-promotion, popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, admiration
6	Professional sample; multinational firm.	$N = 405$; $M_{age} = 43.80$ ($SD = 9.04$); female (%) = 64.9; 56 from the USA., 4.9 from Germany, the rest are from 42 different countries (frequencies < 3.5%). Regarding their educational level, 9.88% had a Ph.D. degree, 28.15% had a master's degree, and 25.43% had a bachelor's degree. For the other participants, data were not obtained on their educational level.	All participants were full-time employed in the firm with a mean tenure of 8.58 years ($SD = 7.38$). The mean time in their position was 2.78 years ($SD = 2.05$). Seniority-wise: 60.3% were at supervisory or managerial levels. Job roles: 42.47% of the respondents belonged to the research and development department, 27.90% were in commercial, 17.28% were in support functions, and 12.35% were in manufacturing.	PBE, perceived employability, perceived career success, performance rating, talent committee performance rating, salary progression

Note. PBE = personal brand equity.

3 | PHASE 1: ITEM DEVELOPMENT AND CONTENT VALIDITY ASSESSMENT

The items to measure PBE were constructed using a deductive approach (Hinkin, 1998). Drawing on the three facets of PBE (*brand appeal*, *brand differentiation*, and *brand recognition*), a pool of 36 items was constructed to capture those three dimensions (see the Appendix). For example, to measure personal brand recognition, items such as "I am known outside of my immediate network" and "An expert in my professional field would not think of me first" (reverse-coded) were developed.

The items were reviewed for clarity and content validity by an industrial and organizational psychologist and a marketing professor, which resulted in a few enhancements to the wording to avoid unnecessarily lengthy items, jargon, redundancy, or ambiguity (DeVellis, 2012; MacKenzie et al., 2011). Subsequently, 15 Ph.D. students in the field of management were asked to complete an electronic survey to test the readability and face validity of the items. Seven responses were received (a 46% response rate) with minor suggestions for revisions in wording, and all 36 items were deemed fit for factor and reliability analyses.

4 | PHASE 2: FACTOR STRUCTURE

To assess the factor structure and reliability of the PBE scale, a two-step approach was used with two different samples. Based on Sample 1, the dimensionality of the PBE scale was assessed by submitting the 36 items to an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which enabled the composite reliability (CR) of the scale to be tested and a parsimonious set of items to be established. Sample 2 was then used to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the retained items. This was done to test the multidimensional nature of the personal brand construct and compare the first-order and second-order models for fit and parsimony (Johnson, Rosen, & Chang, 2011).

4.1 | Phase 2 method

As Fokkema and Greiff (2017) warned against performing the exploratory and confirmatory analyses on the same sample, we collected two samples for the factor analyses using Prolific and Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Crowdsourced samples are now widely used for academic research and are considered reliable and valid, especially for exploratory research and pilot studies (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). In general, scale simplicity is preferred when a new measurement is developed (Dawis, 1987). Hinkin (1998) advocated for using a 5-item Likert-type scale for such purposes as it allows for capturing sufficient variance in responses while increasing the number of scale points beyond five does not result in meaningfully greater coefficient alpha reliability. In Sample 1 (see Table 1 for demographic characteristics), 714 responses were collected via Prolific. As much attention in the personal branding literature has been paid to establishing professional personal brands to gain employment or advance one's career in an organizational setting (Evans, 2017), we collected these responses among employed respondents. We removed seven responses that contained missing values. The boxplot and visual analyses did not indicate any further issues. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 707 respondents. In Sample 2, responses (1,081) were collected using MTurk. After boxplot and visual analyses, 64 responses were removed (due to outliers, acquiescing answering, and missing values), resulting in a total sample of 1,017 respondents. No boundary conditions were imposed on the participants as personal branding is not necessarily specific only to those who have employment (Gandini, 2016; Pagis & Ailon, 2017).

The 36 items generated in Phase 1 were submitted to a series of EFAs to uncover the underlying factor structure of the PBE scale using the SPSS v.26 software. As several EFAs had to be performed because of the large initial number of items, Sample 1 was randomly split in half (Sample 1a, $N = 351$; Sample 1b, $N = 356$). These sample sizes were guided by the conservative advice of Nunnally (1978) that the ratio for EFA should be at least 10:1; another

rule-of-thumb suggests the use of 300 cases (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The principal axis factoring was applied with Promax rotation as recommended by Floyd and Widaman (1995). We used the eigenvalue and scree plot methods to determine the number of factors to be retained (Zickar, 2020).

The CFA tests were performed on Sample 2 (N = 1,017) using AMOS v24. Eight models were tested to identify the model with the best fit: (1) the null baseline model, (2) a one-factor model, (3-5) three different two-factor models, (6) the uncorrelated factors model, (7) the correlated factors model, and (8) the hierarchical model. Seven indices were employed to assess model fit (Noar, 2003; Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006). These were chi-square/*df* ratio (χ^2/df); relative fit indices, including the normed fit index (NFI), incremental fit index (IFI), and Tucker Lewis index (TLI); the comparative fit index (CFI); and parsimony-adjusted measures, including root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and *p* of close fit (Pclose). For the χ^2/df, which indicates the closeness of fit of the model, a score of 3 or less indicates a good fit (Kline, 2011). NFI, TLI, and CFI values greater than .95, IFI values greater than .90, and RMSEA values less than .06 indicate a good fit (Bentler, 1990; Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Pclose is a *p*-value test on RMSEA that must be greater than .05 to reject the null hypothesis that the computed RMSEA is greater than .06 (indicating a poor fit).

4.2 | Phase 2 results

After the first EFA on Sample 1a, we removed 12 (of the 36) items that had loadings <.40 or cross-loadings with less than .15 difference from the item's highest factor loading (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). Then, we removed two reverse-coded items that loaded on a separate factor and two items with loadings <.40. After removing two more items with loadings <.40 in two additional EFA iterations, we moved to Sample 1b and proceeded with EFAs on the 18 remaining items. The first EFA with Sample 1b revealed five factors. Based on these results, we removed one item with a loading <.40 and four additional items that loaded on two separate, nonhypothesized, factors (Items 4, 9, 11, 21, and 22; see the Appendix for the list of items). Next, we removed item 31 "I am frequently contacted by others for advice or services" (loading .53) that conceptually did not belong to the *brand recognition* factor that it loaded on, as it did not measure recognition but the action taken by others based on that awareness. The final EFA with the remaining 12 items resulted in 3 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, and four items loading on each factor (see Table 2). The three factors explained 67% of the total variance in the items. All the loadings were above the minimum cutoff value of .40 and the highest cross-loading was .21 (Hinkin, 1998). Cronbach's alpha of the overall scale was .89, and the alphas for the brand appeal, brand differentiation, and brand recognition subscales were .85, .86, and .93, respectively. These are all above the minimum cutoff value of .70 (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955).

Table 3 presents the results of the CFAs on the five tested models, using Sample 2. The standardized regression weights for all the items were above .60 (Table 2). The correlated factors model and the hierarchical model showed a better model fit than other models, including the one-factor model and all two-factor models, indicating that the three underlying dimensions are distinguishable. The correlations among the subdimensions for Samples 1 and 2 were significant (all p's < .001): appeal and differentiation (r = .62 and r = .60, respectively); differentiation and recognition (r = .50 and r = .62, respectively); and appeal and recognition (r = .35 and r = .44, respectively).

With a three-factor model, the number of parameters in a correlated factors and a hierarchical model is identical. Therefore, to be able to compare the two models, we followed Byrne's (2005) approach and added an equality constraint to the residuals of two of the first-level latent factors. Results showed a slightly better fit for the correlated factors model, $\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 39.68, p < .001. Nevertheless, there are several theoretical arguments for why a hierarchical model is preferred over a correlated factors model when the first-order factors are substantially correlated (Byrne, 2005). Advocates of hierarchical construct models argue that "they allow for more theoretical parsimony and reduce model complexity" (Wetzels, Odekerken-Schröder, & van Oppen, 2009, p. 178). According to Bollen (1989), hierarchical models allow the first-order factors to covary and account for the corrected errors but provided only that the model fits the data. Assessing the PBE model fit across the samples, we found that the first-order constructs (brand

TABLE 2 Personal brand equity scale items, their factor loading (Sample 1), and standardized regression weights (Sample 2)

	Sample 1		Sample 2		F1 (brand appeal)		F2 (brand differentiation)		F3 (brand recognition)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	loading	*β*	loading	*β*	loading	*β*
I have a positive professional image among others.	4.16	.71	4.04	.79	.95	.64				
I have a positive professional reputation.	4.24	.68	4.00	.81	.84	.68				
I am appealing to work with.	4.15	.65	4.00	.82	.68	.64				
My professional strengths are clear.	4.14	.73	4.03	.81	.57	.62				
I am considered a better professional compared to others.	3.52	.88	3.71	.93			.88	.68		
I am regarded as delivering higher professional value compared to others.	3.57	.89	3.78	.89			.86	.73		
I am a preferred candidate for projects and tasks.	3.76	.87	3.85	.89			.69	.71		
I have a reputation for producing high value results.	4.02	.84	3.85	.90			.52	.72		
My name is well known in my professional field.	2.70	1.17	3.54	1.06					.93	.80
I am known in my professional field.	2.96	1.17	3.74	.99					.90	.79
I am known outside of my immediate network.	2.70	1.19	3.54	1.02					.87	.71
I am often recommended by others to their professional contacts.	2.85	1.16	3.61	1.00					.81	.71
Cronbach's alpha					**.85**		**.86**		**.93**	

Note. The reported EFA loadings are from the pattern matrices (Sample 1b; $N = 356$). Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. Loadings < .35 are suppressed for better visualization. The reported standardized betas are obtained from a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Sample 2; $N = 1{,}017$).

Addressing the concern of an anonymous reviewer about the similarity of items "I am known in my professional field" and "My name is well known in my professional field," this study examined their correlations, variance inflation factors (VIFs), and tolerance across the samples. The VIFs ranged from 1.47 to 3.15, which is below the conservative threshold of 5 (Menard, 1995), suggesting inconsequential collinearity. Thus, it was decided to retain both items as the difference between knowing someone's name and knowing the person is akin to the difference between being aware of a brand and having experienced the product.

TABLE 3 Goodness-of-fit indices of the confirmatory factor analysis on the personal brand equity scale (Sample 2; $n = 1{,}017$)

Models	χ^2	*df*	χ^2/df ratio	CFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	RMSEA	Pclose
1. Null	4,693.31***	66	71.12	–	–	–	–	.26	.000
2. One factor	835.31***	54	15.47	.83	.82	.83	.79	.12	.000
3. Two factors (appeal, differentiation + recognition)	531.59***	53	10.03	.90	.89	.90	.87	.09	.000
4. Two factors (differentiation, appeal + recognition)	740.81***	53	14.00	.85	.84	.85	.82	.11	.000
5. Two factors (recognition, appeal + differentiation)	369.37***	53	7.00	.93	.92	.93	.92	.08	.000
6. Uncorrelated three factors	583.80***	54	10.81	.89	.88	.89	.86	.10	.000
7. Correlated three factors	181.21***	51	3.55	.97	.96	.97	.96	.05	.47
8. Hierarchical three factors	220.89***	52	4.25	.96	.95	.96	.95	.06	.08

Note. CFI = comparative fit index; NFI = normed fit index; IFI = incremental fit index; TLI = Tucker Lewis index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; PCLOSE = *p* of close fit. Model 1, the correlations among the observed variables are constrained to be 0; Model 2, the personal brand equity (PBE) scale measures one overall factor; Models 3–5, all possible combinations of two-factor models; Model 6, the three factors of the PBE scale are independent constructs, that is, orthogonal; Model 7, the three factors of the PBE scale are related to one another; and Model 8, a second-order factor accounts for relations among the three PBE scale factors. In Model 8, the additional degree of freedom results from including an equality constraint to two of the residuals.

***$p < .001$; two-tailed tests.

appeal, brand differentiation, and brand recognition) demonstrated adequate internal validity (Table 4 presents the statistics) to be aggregated into a second-level construct. Additionally, a hierarchical model satisfies the compatibility principle, that is, it allows us to match predictor and outcome variables in the model (Johnson, Rosen, Chang, Djurdjevic, & Taing, 2012). These reasons led us to choose the hierarchical construct model for PBE over the correlated factors model.

5 | PHASE 3: PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES OF THE SCALE

The goal of Phase 3 was to provide further evidence of the psychometric properties of the PBE scale by testing its factor structure, reliability, stability, and internal structure.

5.1 | Phase 3 method

5.1.1 | Participants and procedure

Analyses were conducted on data from 3,273 participants from seven separate samples. Data were collected via an electronic survey containing the PBE measure, demographic questions, and other measures (see Table 1 for an overview) to examine the psychometric properties of the PBE scale.

Samples 1 and 2. As described in Phase 2.

Sample 3. Three-hundred and forty-three responses were collected via an online survey by emailing a link to the researchers' contacts and posting the link on social media. After the initial data analysis, 80 responses were removed (due to outliers, acquiescing responding, and missing values in key variables), resulting in a total sample of

TABLE 4 Personal brand equity model internal validity measures (Samples 3–6)

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	1	2	3
Brand appeal	.79, .66,	.50, .35,	.21, .57,	.81, .74,	**.70, .59,**		
	.85, .82	.60, .54	.57, .53	.88, .85	**.77, .73**		
Brand differentiation	.82, .79,	.54, .49,	.48, .57,	.83, .82,	.57*, .75*,	**.73, .70,**	
	.84, .83	.574, .55	.567, .53	.85, .84	.75*, .73*,	**.76, .74**	
Brand recognition	.86, .81,	.61, .53,	.48, .27,	.89, .88,	.22**, .40*,	.56*, .52*,	**.78, .73,**
	.90, .87	.69, .64	.42, .21	.92, .92	.49*, .44*	.65*, .46*	**.83, .80**

Note. CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; MSV = maximum shared variance; MaxR(H) = maximum reliability. The square roots of the AVE values are in bold on the diagonal. A set of four numbers in each cell refers to the four samples in exactly the same sequence, that is, the first number in each cell relates to Sample 3, second – Sample 4, third – Sample 5, and fourth – Sample 6. In Samples 4 and 5, Time 1 measures are reported.
*$p < .001$; two-tailed tests; **$p < .10$.

263 participants (see Table 1 for demographic characteristics). This sample was used for another study (Gorbatov, Khapova, & Lysova, 2019); thus, this paper's psychometric analyses focused on the measure of PBE.

Sample 4. The responses in this sample were collected at two times, 2 weeks apart from business administration bachelor's degree students at a large public Dutch university. The students received research credit for their participation. As the goal was not to measure the change in the variables but to mitigate common method bias by measuring the independent and dependent variables separately, 2 weeks is a reasonable time difference (Johnson, Rosen, & Djurdjevic, 2011). At Time 1, 284 responses were received, six of which were duplicates. In each instance, the first response received was retained. Then, six other responses were deleted that contained missing values. This decision resulted in a total sample of 278 students. At Time 2, the number of responses collected was 280, of which 33 were duplicates. Again, only the first responses were retained. The final sample at Time 2 consisted of 247 cases (see Table 1 for demographic characteristics).

Sample 5. The responses in this sample were collected at two times, 6 weeks apart, via the MTurk platform. As PBE might be affected by work experience, only employed workers were invited for this specific sample. At Time 1, the number of responses collected was 683. Forty-nine responses were incomplete and therefore removed. Although only employed MTurk workers were invited, 20 of them reported not being employed and, hence, their answers were omitted. As an attention check, the scores on the opposite items "I am popular" and "I am not popular" (reverse-coded) from the popularity scale were compared. Twelve respondents had a difference of three or higher, which was considered a clear sign of inattentive responding; therefore, those responses were removed. This resulted in 603 complete responses. At Time 2, the number of responses collected was 349 responses (42% attrition), all of which were complete (see Table 1 for demographic characteristics).

Sample 6. This sample's data were collected at a large multinational firm. A total of 572 responses were received, which were then matched with archival data (see the Sample 6 measures section in Phase 5 for details) by a company representative. As the archival data did not contain full information on all the respondents, the final matched dataset consisted of 405 cases. To ensure confidentiality, the company representative did not have access to the employees' responses, and the researchers did not have access to the employees' identities.

5.1.2 | Measures

In Samples 3–6, PBE was measured using the 12-item scale developed in the previous phases. To examine its factor structure in these new data sets, its model fit was determined. The results confirmed adequate fit to the data, with the CFI statistics ranging from .91 to .95 (average CFI = .93). All items consistently loaded significantly on the respective latent factor (p's $< .001$), and the factor loadings ranged from .46 to .93 across the samples (average factor loading = .74). Again, the fit of the hierarchical model was significantly better than the fit of the one-factor model, where the CFI statistics ranged from .65 to .72 (average CFI = .70). All the χ^2 tests comparing the hierarchical and one-factor models were significant at $p < .001$. These results supported the hierarchical three-factor structure of the PBE scale across Samples 3–6, including the two measurements in Samples 4 and 5.

5.2 | Phase 3 results

5.2.1 | Reliability

Internal consistency reliability, or the homogeneity of the items within the scale, was assessed by examining the coefficient alpha (DeVellis, 2012) in Samples 3–6. The coefficient alpha estimates of the reliability of the overall PBE scale ranged from .84 to .91 ($M = .88$), which can be considered "very good" or "excellent" (DeVellis, 2012). The alphas for the subscales ranged from .59 to .77 for brand appeal ($M = .71$), .71 to .76 for brand value ($M = .73$), and .73 to .83 for brand recognition ($M = .78$).

5.2.2 | Stability

The stability of the PBE scale was assessed in the short term (two-week time interval) using Sample 4 and in the longer term (six-week time-interval) using Sample 5. In Sample 4, PBE at Time 1 was significantly correlated with PBE at Time 2 ($r = .70, p < .001$). Sample 5 showed similar results ($r = .79, p < .001$). Taken together, these results show that the PBE scale is stable over time (test–retest reliability).

5.2.3 | Internal validity

To further establish the construct validity of the PBE scale, we tested the internal convergent and discriminant validity. To test for internal convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) was calculated, which should be higher than .50 to demonstrate convergent validity (MacKenzie et al., 2011). Malhotra and Dash (2011) consider AVE to be a strict conservative measure, claiming that convergent validity can be established statistically through CR values alone (>.70). Similarly, Fornell and Larcker (1981) asserted that "on the basis of [reliability] alone, the researcher may conclude that the convergent validity of the construct is adequate, even though more than 50% of the variance is due to error" (p. 46). Except for the brand appeal and brand differentiation factors in Sample 4, the AVE values for the three PBE subdimensions met or exceeded the required value of .50 (Table 4). The CR measures for the three subscales were also higher than the cutoff value of .70 or very close to it (CR = .66 in one case). Based on these AVE and CR values across the three samples, the internal convergent validity of the PBE scale can be established.

For a scale to demonstrate discriminant validity, its maximum shared variance (MSV) must be lower than the AVE, and the square root of the AVE must be greater than the interconstruct correlations (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2014). Table 4 shows that, with the exception of brand appeal and differentiation in Sample 4, the MSVs for all of the PBE scale's factors are lower than the respective AVE values, and the square root of the AVE exceeds the correlations between the scales, proving discriminant validity. Therefore, the internal discriminant validity of the PBE scale is established, which suggests that response biases are likely to be insignificant.

6 | PHASE 4: CONVERGENT AND DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY EVIDENCE FOR THE PERSONAL BRAND EQUITY SCALE

To establish external convergent validity, the relationships between PBE and constructs that should be significantly related to it were examined. Conversely, external discriminant validity is established when PBE has low or null correlations with conceptually dissimilar constructs (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Hinkin, 1998). This study's convergent validity analyses centered on the concepts in the nomological field of PBE. It was expected that PBE would be positively related but distinct from self-promotion, popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, and admiration (Hypothesis 1). The convergent and discriminant validity of the PBE scale was also considered using the HEXACO model of personality (Hypothesis 2) and the correlations between the PBE scale and career achievement aspiration (Hypothesis 3). PBE was not expected to be related to demographic characteristics such as gender or age. However, work experience should be positively related to PBE.

6.1 | Phase 4 method

6.1.1 | Sample and measures

The analyses in this phase were performed on Samples 4 and 5. In these samples, the following measures were collected at Time 1: self-promotion, popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, admiration, personality, and career

achievement aspiration. PBE was measured at both times with the Time 2 measure used for these analyses. The temporal separation mitigates the common method bias that is potentially present when measures are collected in the same survey (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). All the responses were collected using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Self-promotion was measured with the 6-item scale of Bolino and Turnley (1999). An example item is "I make public my talents or qualifications." Cronbach's alphas for this scale in Samples 4 and 5 were .81 and .91, respectively.

Popularity was measured using the 8-item scale developed by Scott and Judge (2009). An example item is "I am socially visible." Cronbach's alphas for this scale in Samples 4 and 5 were .83 and .89, respectively.

Reputation was measured with the 12-item scale of Hochwarter et al. (2007). A sample item is "I have a good reputation." Cronbach's alphas for this scale in Samples 4 and 5 were .83 and .93, respectively.

Prestige was measured using the 8-item scale of Cheng, Tracy, and Henrich (2010). A sample item is "Others seek my advice on a variety of matters." Cronbach's alphas for this scale in Samples 4 and 5 were .69 and .87, respectively.

Dominance was measured using the 8-item scale of Cheng et al. (2010). A sample item is "I am willing to use aggressive tactics to get my way." Cronbach's alphas for this scale in Samples 4 and 5 were .81 and .89, respectively.

Admiration was measured with the 7-item skill subscale of the multidimensional admiration scale from Sarapin, Christy, Lareau, Krakow, and Jensen (2015). A sample item is "I am outstanding in my field." Cronbach's alphas for this scale in Samples 4 and 5 were .81 and .91, respectively.

Personality (Sample 4 only) was measured with the 24-item Brief HEXACO Inventory developed by De Vries (2013), which consists of six factors: honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Cronbach's alphas for the six factors of the HEXACO scale were, respectively, .40, .49, .53, .41, .50, and .58. The factors of this brief personality inventory are known to have relatively low alpha reliability because the items measure different facets within the same broad personality domain. Yet, the test–retest reliability coefficients and self-other agreement are adequate (de Vries, 2013).

Career achievement aspiration (Sample 4 only) was measured with an 8-item scale developed by Gregor and O'Brien (2016). An example item is "I plan to obtain many promotions in my organization or business." Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .73.

Participants were asked to indicate their work experience (number of years). The demographic data were retrieved from the research database using the participants' unique research number (Sample 4), thus preserving their anonymity. In Sample 5, the participants reported those data and provided their MTurk ID to allow us to match the Time 1 and Time 2 data. All Sample 5 measures were presented to the participants in a randomized order.

6.2 | Phase 4 results

The bivariate correlations between PBE (measured at Time 2) and other variables (measured at Time 1), presented in Table 5, provide evidence of convergent and discriminant validity. In Sample 4, PBE was significantly related to popularity ($r = .38$, $p < .001$), admiration ($r = .60$, $p < .001$), prestige ($r = .53$, $p < .001$), reputation ($r = .52$, $p < .001$), self-promotion ($r = .29$, $p < .001$), dominance ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), honesty-humility ($r = -.14$, $p = .02$), extraversion ($r = .22$, $p = .001$), conscientiousness ($r = .20$, $p = .002$), openness to experience ($r = .17$, $p = .007$), and career achievement aspiration ($r = .39$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, PBE was significantly related to work experience ($r = .17$, $p = .008$) but unrelated to age ($r = .08$, $p = .21$), gender ($r = -.02$, $p = .82$), emotionality ($r = -.08$, $p = .23$), and agreeableness ($r = -.10$, $p = .11$).

The data from Sample 5 reflected similar findings (Table 6). PBE was significantly related to popularity ($r = .65$, $p < .001$), admiration ($r = .72$, $p < .001$), prestige ($r = .68$, $p < .001$), reputation ($r = .64$, $p < .001$), self-promotion ($r = .29$, $p < .001$), and dominance ($r = .14$, $p = .01$). It was unrelated to age ($r = .01$, $p = .92$) and gender ($r = -.01$, $p = .85$). Thus, Hypotheses 1–3 were supported.

TABLE 5 Means, standard deviations (*SD*), correlations, and Cronbach's alphas of the study variables (Sample 4; T1 $n = 278$, T2 $n = 247$)

	M	*SD*	*N*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	19.53	1.43	278	–									
2. Gender	0.69	0.46	278	−.01	–								
3. Work experience	3.10	1.92	278	.08	.02	–							
4. PBE T1	3.26	0.52	278	.08	−.02	.21**	**.84**						
5. PBE T2	3.32	0.52	247	.08	−.01	.17**	.70**	**.86**					
6. Career achievement aspiration	3.89	0.51	278	.09	.08	.10	.42**	.39**	**.73**				
7. Self-promotion	2.85	0.76	278	−.04	−.01	−.06	.44**	.29**	.22**	**.81**			
8. Perceived employability	3.53	0.60	247	.04	−.03	.19**	.50**	.63**	.32**	.24**	**.71**		
9. Popularity	3.68	0.53	278	.02	−.01	.24**	.39**	.38**	.21**	.35**	.39**	**.83**	
10. Reputation	3.56	0.46	278	.06	.00	.12	.58**	.52**	.39**	.33**	.42**	.44**	**.83**
11. Prestige	3.73	0.43	278	.02	.06	.10	.46**	.53**	.36**	.16**	.48**	.43**	.55**
12. Dominance	2.90	0.71	278	.01	.01	.09	.34**	.28**	.27**	.45**	.22**	.19**	.35**
13. Admiration	3.15	0.58	278	.00	−.01	.14*	.61**	.60**	.41**	.33**	.44**	.33**	.57**
14. Honesty-humility	3.25	0.70	278	−.04	.08	−.03	−.24**	−.14*	−.13*	−.36**	−.13*	−.14*	−.05
15. Emotionality	2.54	0.75	278	−.01	−.07	−.06	−.08	−.08	−.10	−.04	−.10	−.13*	−.17**
16. Extraversion	3.95	0.59	278	−.06	.04	.15*	.21**	.22**	.22**	.16**	.34**	.43**	.23**
17. Agreeableness	2.94	0.61	278	−.03	−.08	.09	−.11	−.10	−.24**	−.24**	−.10	−.08	−.19**
18. Conscientiousness	3.37	0.63	278	−.04	.00	−.05	.20**	.20**	.21**	.05	.13*	−.02	.22**
19. Openness to experience	3.53	0.74	278	.11	.06	.00	.19**	.17**	.26**	.14*	.28**	.06	.23**

(Continues)

TABLE 5 (Continued)

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
11. Prestige	**.69**								
12. Dominance	.15*	**.81**							
13. Admiration	.51**	.30**	**.81**						
14. Honesty-humility	−.06	−.42**	−.21**	**.40**					
15. Emotionality	−.26**	−.01	−.21**	.10	**.49**				
16. Extraversion	.35**	.09	.12*	.00	−.17**	**.53**			
17. Agreeableness	−.18**	−.47**	−.08	.15*	−.10	−.06	**.41**		
18. Conscientiousness	.16**	.01	.11	.05	.11	.12	−.04	**.50**	
19. Openness to experience	.24**	.21**	.17**	−.14*	.05	.19**	−.16**	.23**	**.58**

Note. PBE = personal brand equity. T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2. Cronbach's alphas are on the diagonal (in bold). Gender is coded as 1 = *female* and 0 = *male*.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; two-tailed tests.

TABLE 6 Means, standard deviations (*SD*), correlations, and Cronbach's alphas of the study variables (Sample 5; T1 $n = 603$, T2 $n = 349$)

	M	*SD*	*N*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age	37.81	10.13	603	–												
2. Gender	1.45	.50	603	.16**	–											
3. PBE T1	3.85	0.69	603	.05	.01	**.91**										
4. PBE T2	3.90	0.65	349	.01	−.01	.79**	**.90**									
5. Self-promotion	2.66	1.06	603	−.19**	−.16**	.33**	.29**	**.91**								
6. Popularity	3.67	0.78	603	.02	−.03	.68**	.65**	.34**	**.89**							
7. Reputation	4.09	0.61	603	.12**	.04	.73**	.64**	.12**	.58**	**.93**						
8. Prestige	3.93	0.68	603	.11**	−.02	.72**	.68**	.15**	.67**	.75**	**.87**					
9. Dominance	2.49	0.88	603	−.23**	−.18**	.19**	.14**	.59**	.21**	.06	.06	**.89**				
10. Admiration	3.83	0.79	603	.06	−.01	.76**	.72**	.33**	.68**	.69**	.69**	.22**	**.91**			
11. Perceived career success	3.51	0.72	349	−.04	−.01	.54**	.63**	.30**	.51**	.39**	.43**	.18**	.59**	**.84**		
12. Perceived employability	3.87	0.80	349	−.09	−.06	.64**	.72**	.28**	.57**	.51**	.60**	.17**	.60**	.63**	**.86**	
13. Self-rated job performance	4.28	0.61	349	.18**	.06	.57**	.51**	.01	.42**	.70**	.59**	−.07	.53**	.29**	.36**	**.84**

Note. PBE = personal brand equity. T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2. Cronbach's alphas are on the diagonal (in bold). Gender is coded as 1 = *female* and 0 = *male*.
**$p < .01$; two-tailed tests.

Finally, χ^2 difference tests were performed via CFA on Sample 4 to determine whether PBE can be distinguished from popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, admiration, honesty-humility, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. A lower χ^2 value for the one-factor model or a nonsignificant χ^2 difference indicates that the two constructs may be redundant (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). As expected, for all the constructs, the two-factor models (i.e., when the covariance between PBE and the related construct was freely estimated) showed a better fit to the data than the one-factor models (i.e., when the covariance between PBE and the related construct was set to 1.00): popularity, $\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 262.38; reputation, $\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 136.24; prestige, $\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 240.31; dominance, $\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 196.31; admiration, $\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 225.72; honesty-humility, $\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 333.07; extraversion, $\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 251.83; conscientiousness, $\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 246.58; and openness to experience, $\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 242.99 (all *p*'s < .01). These results provide evidence that PBE is a construct that is distinct from popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, admiration, honesty-humility, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience.

6.2.1 | Comparison of personal brand equity levels

The level of PBE was expected to be lower in the student sample (Sample 4) than the employed samples (Samples 5 and 6) as PBE presupposes the collection of social and human capital, which requires work experience. To test this assumption, an analysis of variance was performed on Samples 4–6 (PBE measures at Time 1 were used in Samples 4 and 5). There was a significant difference in PBE among the groups: F (2, 1283) = 100.37, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.14$. Tukey's HSD pairwise comparisons with adjusted *p*-values showed that there were significant differences between the student sample and the employed Sample 5 (Mean difference = 0.59, $p < .001$, $d = 0.97$) and the employed Sample 6 (Mean difference = 0.58, $p < .001$, $d = 1.08$). The difference between Samples 5 and 6 was not significant (Mean difference = 0.01, $p = .97$, $d = 0.02$). These significant differences between groups that theoretically should have distinct levels of PBE provide further evidence for the construct validity of the PBE scale.

7 | PHASE 5: CRITERION VALIDITY EVIDENCE FOR THE PERSONAL BRAND EQUITY SCALE

The purpose of this phase was to test Hypotheses 4–7 regarding the relationships among PBE, career-related criteria, and job performance.

7.1 | Phase 5 method

7.1.1 | Sample and measures

These analyses were performed on Samples 4–6. In all instances, the participants were asked to respond on a 5-point scale with answers ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), unless indicated otherwise.

Perceived employability was measured in Samples 4–6 with the 5-item scale developed by Berntson and Marklund (2007). An example item is "My experience is in demand on the labor market." Cronbach's alphas were .71 (Sample 4, T2), .86 (Sample 5, T2), and .83 (Sample 6).

Perceived career success was measured in Samples 5 and 6 with the 4-item scale as used by Turban and Dougherty (1994). Three items, for example, "How successful has your career been?" had to be answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very unsuccessful*) to 5 (*very successful*). The item "Given your age, do you think that your career is 'on schedule', or ahead or behind schedule?" was answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*behind schedule*) to 5 (*ahead of schedule*). Cronbach's alphas were .84 (Sample 5, T2) and .79 (Sample 6).

Self-rated job performance was measured in Sample 5 (T2) with a 3-item scale based on Goris, Vaught, and Pettit (2003). The items were: "How would you rate the quality of your own performance in your job?" "How do you think your supervisor would rate the quality of your performance?" and "How do you think your colleagues would rate the quality of your performance?" The responses were collected on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very poor*) to 5 (*excellent*). Cronbach's alpha was .84.

Performance ratings and salary progression. Supervisor-rated performance ratings, talent committee performance ratings, and salary progression were collected for Sample 6 through the company's human resources management (HRM) system provided to us fully anonymized. The supervisors evaluated the performance of their employees on an annual basis using a 5-point system, where 1 means "*does not meet expectations*" and 5 means "*exceeds expectations*." The supervisors' ratings were then discussed in a talent committee with other managers, superiors, and human resources representatives. The employee's performance is compared to the performance of other employees at a similar level and, subsequently, deemed high, average, or low. The dummy variables "3″, "2″, and "1″, respectively, were created to reflect those ratings. Salary progression was operationalized as a percentage change in salary over the past 3 years.

Control variables in Sample 6

The participants' gender, age, job level, and tenure with the company were provided to the study as demographic variables. Gender was coded as 0 = *female* and 1 = *male*. Age and tenure were indicated in years. The respondents were at 20 different job levels, reflecting the complexity of the job and the degree of accountability for outcomes. For ease of analysis, those levels were recoded to range from 1 to 20, where 1 would approximately relate to a junior intern and 20 to a senior director. The survey was administered after the performance ratings were entered into the company's HRM system (both the ratings from the supervisors and the talent committee ratings), but before they were communicated to the employee, thus preventing any contamination effect. Table 7 details the means, standard deviations, and the correlations among the variables in Sample 6.

7.2 | Phase 5 results

Tables 5–7 present the bivariate correlations between PBE and the criterion variables in Samples 4–6. To test the criterion-related validity of PBE, a series of hierarchical regression analyses were performed. Table 8 reports the results obtained in Samples 4 and 5. In these samples, we examined whether PBE is able to explain a significant part of the variance in the dependent variables after controlling for age, gender, and the constructs from the same nomological field (self-promotion, popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, and admiration).

Controlled for age and gender, self-promotion, popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, and admiration explained a significant part of the variance in perceived employability (Sample 4: $\Delta F = 18.84$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .32$; Sample 5: $\Delta F = 49.36$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .46$); perceived career success (Sample 5: $\Delta F = 36.03$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .39$); and self-rated job performance (Sample 5: $\Delta F = 58.44$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .49$). In line with Hypotheses 4 and 5, PBE explained a significant part of the variance in perceived employability (Sample 4: $\beta = .26$, $p < .001$, $\Delta F = 11.32$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .03$; Sample 5: $\beta = .26$, $p < .001$, $\Delta F = 12.78$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .02$) and perceived career success (Sample 5: $\beta = .18$, $p = .02$, $\Delta F = 5.38$, $p = .02$, $\Delta R^2 = .01$) over and above age, gender, and the constructs from the same nomological field. Furthermore, PBE explained a significant part of the variance in self-rated job performance (Sample 5: $\beta = .19$, $p = .007$, $\Delta F = 7.45$, $p = .007$, $\Delta R^2 = .01$) over and above age, gender, and the constructs from the same nomological field, supporting Hypothesis 7a.

Table 9 reports the results obtained in Sample 6. The results of the regression analyses on Sample 6 further supported Hypotheses 4 and 5, as PBE explained a significant part of the variance in career success ($\beta = .50$, $p < .001$, $\Delta F = 133.55$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .25$) and perceived employability ($\beta = .49$, $p < .001$, $\Delta F = 132.64$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .24$) over and above age, gender, and tenure.

TABLE 7 Means, standard deviations (*SD*), correlations and Cronbach's alphas of the study variables (Sample 6; $n = 405$)

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	43.80	9.04	–									
2. Gender	.35	.48	.04	–								
3. Tenure	8.58	7.38	.49**	.07	–							
4. Job level	13.13	3.21	.30**	.09	.23***	–						
5. PBE	3.84	0.55	.02	.06	.06	.05	**.88**					
6. Perceived employability	3.99	0.69	.02	.11*	−.10*	.17**	.49**	**.83**				
7. Perceived career success	3.73	0.64	−.03	.03	.03	.22**	.50**	.42**	**.79**			
8. Performance rating	3.24	0.57	−.21**	.03	−.11*	.03	.01	.01	.06	–		
9. Talent committee performance rating	2.26	0.50	−.20**	−.03	−.07	.05	.13*	.07	.13**	.38**	–	
10. Salary progression	0.39	4.36	.01	−.04	−.04	.06	.06	.06	.03	−.02	−.02	–

Note. PBE = personal brand equity. Cronbach's alphas are on the diagonal (in bold). Gender is coded as 1 = *female* and 0 = *male*.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; two-tailed tests.

TABLE 8 Results of hierarchical regression analyses for career success and job performance (Samples 4 and 5)

	Perceived employability (Sample 4)			Perceived employability (Sample 5)			Perceived career success (Sample 5)			Self-rated job performance (Sample 5)		
Variable	β, M1	β, M2	β, M3	β, M1	β, M2	β, M3	β, M1	β, M2	β, M3	β, M1	β, M2	β, M3
Step 1												
Age	.04	.03	.02	−.08	−.14**	−.13**	−.04	−.07	−.07	.17**	.06	.06
Gender	−.03	−.04	−.05	−.04	−.02	−.03	−.01	.01	.01	.03	.01	.01
Step 2												
Self-promotion		.05	.001		.07	.04		.09	.07		−.08	−.01
Popularity		.16*	.15*		.18**	.13*		.22***	.19**		.01	−.03
Reputation		.06	.01		.05	−.01		−.06	−.10		.55***	.51***
Prestige		.28***	.25***		.27***	.21**		−.01	−.06		.14*	.09
Dominance		.04	.01		−.01	−.01		−.03	−.03		−.06	−.06
Admiration		.19**	.09		.26***	.18**		.48***	.43***		.08	.02
Step 3												
PBE (T1)			.26***			.26***			.18*			.19**
Adjusted R^2	−.01	.30	.33	.004	.46	.48	−.004	.38	.38	.03	.52	.53
ΔR^2	.002	.32	.03	.01	.46	.02	.01	.39	.01	.03	.49	.01
ΔF	.28	18.84***	11.32***	1.67	49.36***	12.78***	.30	36.03***	5.38*	5.80**	58.44***	7.25**

Note. PBE = personal brand equity. In Sample 4, the measure of perceived employability at T2 is used. Standardized betas are reported in three models (*M*1, *M*2, and *M*3).
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

TABLE 9 Results of hierarchical regression analyses for career success and job performance (Sample 6)

	Perceived career success		Perceived employability		Salary progression		Performance rating		Talent committee performance rating	
Variable	β, M1	β, M2	β, M1	β, M2	β, M1	β, M2	β, M1	β, M2	β, M1	β, M2
Step 1										
Age	−.05	−.05	.08	.09	.04	.04	−.21***	−.21***	−.22***	−.22***
Gender	.03	.00	.11*	.08	−.04	−.04	.04	.04	−.02	−.03
Tenure	.05	.04	−.15**	−17**	−.06	−.06	−.01	−.01	−.04	.04
Step 2										
PBE		.50***		.49***		.07		.01		.13**
Adjusted R^2	−.004	.25	.02	.26	−.004	−.002	.04	.04	.03	.05
ΔR^2		.25		.24		.004		.00		.02
ΔF	.53	133.55***	3.98**	132.64***	.53	1.79	6.35***	.05	5.81**	7.07**

Note. PBE = personal brand equity. Standardized betas are reported in two models (*M*1 and *M*2).
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that PBE would be positively related to salary progression. However, the effect of PBE on salary progression was nonsignificant ($\beta = .07$, $p = .18$, $\Delta F = 1.79$, $p = .18$, $\Delta R^2 = .004$). Therefore, Hypothesis 6 was not supported. Finally, Hypothesis 7b stated that PBE would relate positively and significantly to other-rated job performance. Indeed, PBE explained a significant part of the variance in the talent committee performance ratings ($\beta = .13$, $p = .008$, $\Delta F = 7.07$, $p = .01$, $\Delta R^2 = .02$) over and above age, gender, and tenure. However, the relationship between PBE and performance ratings provided by the supervisor was nonsignificant ($\beta = .01$, $p = .82$, $\Delta F = 0.05$, $p = .82$, $\Delta R^2 = .00$). Therefore, Hypothesis 7b received mixed support.

8 | DISCUSSION

Despite the increasing importance of having strong PBE for achieving career success in today's competitive work environment, the careers literature has lacked a definition and operationalization of this construct. In this paper, we articulated a clear definition of PBE, developed a 12-item PBE scale, and examined the relationships between PBE and several career-related constructs (e.g., career achievement aspiration); career success (perceived career success, perceived employability, and salary progression) and job performance (self-rated and other-rated). As such, with this study, we make several important contributions.

8.1 | Theoretical implications

First, we contribute to the literature on contemporary careers and personal branding by providing a clear definition of PBE, which is an essential building block of theory development (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2016). In line with prior research (e.g., Jillapalli & Jillapalli, 2014; Shafaei, Nejati, & Maadad, 2019), the definition of PBE as reflecting an individual's perception of the value of one's personal brand derived from its appeal, differentiation, and recognition in a given professional field allows it to be measured via self-reports. Self-reports are particularly valuable in situations where the costs of obtaining the opinions of others outweigh the benefits, such as when having to ask managers or peers in a toxic work environment to assess one's PBE. A validated measure of PBE was called for as the previous measures of PBE (e.g., Jillapalli & Jillapalli, 2014; Shafaei et al., 2019) have not been developed according to established scale development procedures. Therefore, drawing on the refined definition of PBE, a new 12-item PBE scale was developed comprising three dimensions: brand appeal, brand differentiation, and brand recognition.

By showing that PBE is a multidimensional construct, we suggest that the personal branding research to date may have lacked nuance in the understanding of PBE. The measure of PBE put forward in this paper provides researchers and practitioners the opportunity to measure PBE as an overall construct or to focus on narrower dimensions. According to the construct correspondence account (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974), optimal criterion-related validity can be attained when predictors and criteria are matched (Hough & Furnham, 2003). Thus, when predicting very specific criteria (e.g., social network strength, where the network size and strength of ties are important), one may want to focus on the subdimension of brand recognition, which specifically taps into the network size and ties strength aspects, rather than the overall construct. Utilizing data from four samples (total $N = 3{,}273$), we found evidence for the reliability and validity of the newly developed PBE scale. Furthermore, its dimensional structure holds in different cultural contexts and samples (students and employees), making the scale generalizable across wide populations.

Second, with this paper we show that PBE is conceptually different from other established constructs in the self-presentation and career literature (e.g., Gorbatov et al., 2018; Zinko & Rubin, 2015). PBE was found to be related to but distinct from self-promotion, popularity, reputation, prestige, dominance, admiration, and career achievement aspiration. PBE was also positively correlated, as expected, with extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, and it was negatively correlated with honesty-humility. These outcomes are aligned with the established

literature on personality differences and self-presentation behaviors. For instance, extraverts are known to post more photos on Facebook (Lee, Ahn, & Kim, 2014). Moreover, Fox and Rooney (2015) found significant relationships between the Dark Triad of traits narcissism and psychopathy, which are known to be negatively related to honesty-humility (Lee & Ashton, 2014), and self-presentation on social networking sites. This suggests that individuals see PBE as an important and unique vehicle for achieving career success and, therefore, deserves to be further researched alongside other established constructs in the self-presentation and career literatures. Additionally, as personal branding today heavily leverages social networking and web resources, it is of academic interest to explore the role of personality in online personal branding or what Krämer and Winter (2008) dubbed "Impression Management 2.0."

Third, this paper contributes to the literature on career outcomes (Ng et al., 2005; Wang & Wanberg, 2017) by showing that in three different samples of students and employees, PBE was positively related to subjective ratings of job and career success (subjective career success, perceived employability, and self-rated job performance). Thus, in line with the prior research on personal branding (Gorbatov et al., 2019; Pagis & Ailon, 2017; Vallas & Cummins, 2015), individuals may influence their subjective evaluations of their career success, employability, and performance through their PBE. Furthermore, PBE was related to other-rated job performance (i.e., talent committee ratings). Thus, by being aware and creating a perception of one's value in the minds of others, individuals with higher PBE obtain higher performance ratings when a group of people discuss their performance. Previous research has shown that impression management leads to a wide array of career benefits (Bolino et al., 2016). Thus, it is likely that PBE influences performance ratings through similar processes of creating a positive image in the minds of others.

Surprisingly, the results showed that PBE was not related to supervisor ratings or salary progression. In other words, it is possible that the effect of personal branding is stronger on others in the organization than on the direct supervisor who rates the individual's performance and determines compensation. There is evidence that impression management has an indirect positive effect on performance ratings (Wayne & Liden, 1995). However, Higgins, Judge, and Ferris (2003) meta-analysis showed that self-promotion was effective in job interviews but ineffective in obtaining favorable performance assessments from supervisors because, in contrast to interviewers, supervisors could more easily verify the validity of self-promotional claims. This explanation could be extrapolated to this study's findings and suggest that PBE is more effective in environments more susceptible to impression management, that is, where claims of professional value and achievements are more difficult to verify. This finding warrants deeper exploration. This is a particularly important avenue because contemporary careers and novel employment arrangements, such as gig work, are predicated upon frequent employer changes and, therefore, greater information asymmetry between workers and employers.

Finally, we contribute to the literature on graduate employability (Khedher, 2019; Tymon et al., 2019) and early careers (Seibert, Kraimer, Holtom, & Pierotti, 2013) by showing that students report lower levels of PBE than employed adults. This finding is not surprising as PBE, as a form of human and social capital, tends to increase over time with the accumulation of knowledge and experience (Saleem & Iglesias, 2015; Vallas & Christin, 2018). Indeed, our findings show that PBE was positively related to work experience. However, it is also possible that students are less likely to consider separating their personal and professional identities, striving for greater authenticity. The need for authenticity has been proven to be stronger in adolescents, positively impacting their subjective well-being and helping satisfy the needs for competence and relatedness (Thomaes, Sedikides, van den Bos, Hutteman, & Reijntjes, 2017). Thus, adolescents may shun personal branding as it may imply a certain degree of manipulation in creating the image desired by the target audience. As opposed to students, personal brand authenticity is a concern for professionals (Molyneux, Holton, & Lewis, 2018; Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017; Sihi & Lawson, 2018). While there are calls to make one's personal brand "authentic" (Pruchniewska, 2018; Thompson-Whiteside, Turnbull, & Howe-Walsh, 2018), such a goal is associated with greater emotional labor and potentially damaging personal disclosures (Bridgen, 2011; Vallas & Cummins, 2015). Future research is therefore needed to examine personal and contextual factors that explain the differences in PBE across different populations and generations.

8.2 | Practical implications

Regarding this study's practical implications, PBE is a relevant concept for (a) career seekers, (b) career counselors, (c) leadership development programs, and (d) HRM interventions. Career seekers can utilize the PBE scale as a diagnostic tool. By measuring one's brand appeal, brand differentiation, and brand recognition, as well as soliciting others' views, individuals can gain valuable insights into how to adjust the positioning of the professional self to gain beneficial career outcomes. As the results of this paper indicate that PBE is related to important career criteria such as perceived career success, perceived employability, and job performance, a concerted effort to increase an individual's PBE could yield various benefits associated with these criteria. These include, for instance, well-being as an outcome of perceived employability (Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, Witte, & Alarco, 2008). PBE would also be a useful framework for career counselors to provide advice around creating and positioning one's personal brand. They could make use of the scale to help career seekers to perform a PBE assessment to analyze which of the three subdimensions needs attention and to determine a plan of action. Furthermore, this scale can be used as a tool for leadership development courses that aim to enhance participants' self-awareness and understanding of personal career trajectories. Since PBE can be measured by oneself and others, tools such as a 360-degree assessment as part of HRM interventions could be developed to compare those perceptions and analyze the gaps to determine priorities for individual development.

8.3 | Limitations and future directions

First, the PBE scale has been developed and validated as a self-report measure. Self-report measures of constructs in the same nomological field as PBE demonstrate high accuracy and predictive ability. Previous research has shown that individuals are generally accurate perceivers of their social status (Anderson et al., 2006), and, therefore, many status-related constructs (e.g., popularity, reputations, and prestige) are commonly measured through self-reports. For instance, prestige is defined as "status granted to individuals who are recognized and respected for their skills, success or knowledge" (Cheng et al., 2010, p. 335), which, similarly to PBE, could be attained through greater appeal, differentiation, and recognition. Based on the correlations between self-reported and other-reported prestige, Cheng et al. (2010) concluded that self-reports of prestige generally show high accuracy. For this reason, prestige is often measured through self-reports (Cheng et al., 2010; Johnson, Burk, & Kirkpatrick, 2007; Lange, Redford, & Crusius, 2019). Hence, as a self-report measure, PBE can explain a wide variety of relations among constructs related to self-presentation. Nevertheless, future studies should also conceptualize PBE from others' point of view and develop an other-report measure of PBE that fits this conceptualization. Although this study's self-report measure can provide a good basis for an other-report measure, it is likely that new scale items need to be developed and validated.

Second, the validity studies were performed on rather homogenous samples of students and employed workers. The six samples used for this study largely included well-educated English-speaking participants, which raises a concern about the generalizability of the scale beyond white-collar occupations. While an argument could be made for how personal branding could help the careers of white-collar workers, it may not be as straightforward for unskilled workers. Therefore, an essential next step is to validate this scale in more diverse samples and in various contexts. There should be more research on personal branding in organizational contexts and its outcomes for different categories of employees and their employers. For example, by studying the personal branding of journalists, Molyneux et al. (2018) discovered that the organizational branding of their employers was more prevalent than expressing their individuality. This effect was weaker for journalists who had engaged in personal branding for a longer period before employers began to pay closer attention to their employees' social media activities. In the future, researchers need to explore further the boundary conditions related to the PBE construct. Studies on gig-economy participants (Gandini, 2016; Scolere et al., 2018; Vallas & Christin, 2018) who may benefit more from higher PBE than workers pursuing traditional careers would be particularly interesting. It should be noted that for workers in blue-collar (e.g., truck drivers)

or stigmatized professions (e.g., sex work), some of the PBE scale items would not be applicable, especially those in the brand differentiation dimension (e.g., the item "I am a preferred candidate for projects and tasks" is unlikely to generalize to workers in menial jobs).

Another limitation is related to the fact that while we collected time-lagged data, we are unable to claim causality in any of the described relationships between PBE and the related constructs. Future research should use study designs that allow for addressing questions of causality. Also, we only focused on a few outcome variables. Future research could explore how PBE might lead to beneficial outcomes such as self-realization, social capital, financial gains, job search success, and career opportunities (Paivi & Back, 2017; Rangarajan et al., 2017; Vallas & Hill, 2018). Additionally, it is possible that some of the correlations between PBE and the personality traits are not significant (or only moderate) due to error in the personality trait scores. Although the effects on construct and criterion-related validity of short personality measures with generally low internal consistency coefficients are not as large as previously feared (e.g., De Vries, 2013), further validation is needed to replicate the results.

Finally, future studies should investigate whether PBE can predict other variables that are often associated with those constructs from the same nomological field. To suggest a few examples, employee's popularity was found to predict received organizational citizenship behavior (positively) and counterproductive work behavior (negatively) (Scott & Judge, 2009). Additionally, reputation is known to be positively related to power and autonomy (Zinko, Ferris, Humphrey, Meyer, & Aime, 2012), and dominance and prestige to social rank (Cheng et al., 2013). These studies could further strengthen the unique value of PBE as a proactive career behavior in the context of contemporary careers. Further research should also explore the antecedents of PBE, for instance, career events (e.g., Schlosser et al., 2017), role or industry (Cederberg, 2017; Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017), and individual characteristics (Pihl, 2013; Zinko & Rubin, 2015). In addition to the commonly discussed positive outcomes of personal branding, the negative effects of PBE could be examined. It is plausible to hypothesize that very high levels of PBE could result in feelings of resentment and jealousy in others, similarly to the improper use of impression management behaviors (Crant, 1996; Luginbuhl & Palmer, 1991). This is supported by Thompson-Whiteside et al.'s (2018) qualitative findings that female entrepreneurs are wary of self-promotional tactics to communicate their personal brand. This finding is in line with Rudman (1998), who argued that self-promotional activities carry a cost for women and not for men. The findings by Molyneux (2019) suggest that gender has an important role to play in personal branding. Therefore, it would be good to see further studies focusing on gender differences in building PBE, specifically including an array of both positive and negative outcomes.

9 | CONCLUSION

Today, as the agency for career management has moved to the worker, "individuals need to take charge of their own career and career progression, rather than the organization [and] careers should be individually driven by one's personal values rather than organizational rewards" (Wang & Wanberg, 2017, p. 549). As a response, the research on personal brands has recently grown. We hope that this paper's contributions will enable researchers to enhance the collective understanding of personal brands as well as assist career seekers and career counselors in diagnosing PBE to make informed career decisions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank Beau Scherpenzeel and Shiyao Tong for assisting with the data collection for Sample 3 reported in this paper.

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How to cite this article: Gorbatov S., Khapova S. N., Oostrom J. K., Lysova E. I. Personal brand equity: Scale development and validation. *Personnel Psychology*. 2021;74:505–542. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12412

APPENDIX: PERSONAL BRAND EQUITY ITEMS POOL

Brand appeal

1. I have a positive professional image among others.*
2. I have a positive professional reputation.*
3. I am appealing to work with.*
4. My professional story is clear.
5. My personal values are reflected in my work.

6. My professional strengths are clear.*
7. My work stands out.
8. My work stands out from the work of others.
9. My work is distinctly recognizable.
10. I have a distinct professional image.
11. My work has a distinctive style.
12. What I offer professionally is no different than others. (r)

Brand differentiation

1. I have a reputation for producing high value results.*
2. I am considered a better professional compared to others.*
3. The work that I deliver meets or exceeds what I promise.
4. My work is highly valued by others.
5. Working with me provides access to my network.
6. Working with me provides access to my expertise.
7. I am regarded as delivering higher professional value compared to others. *
8. Working with me is rewarding.
9. It is great to work with me.
10. Working with me is a positive experience.
11. Being associated with me offers many benefits.
12. There are no significant benefits of working with me. (r)
13. I am a preferred candidate for projects and tasks.*

Brand recognition

1. I am more likely to succeed professionally than others.
2. I am known in my professional field.*
3. My name is well known in my professional field. *
4. I am known outside of my immediate network.*
5. I am regarded as an expert in my professional domain.
6. I am frequently contacted by others for advice or services.
7. I am often recommended by others to their professional contacts.*
8. An expert in my professional field would not think of me first. (r)
9. Working with me is no different than working with others in my professional field. (r)
10. My professional online profile has endorsements and/or recommendations from others.
11. I have clear expertise in my professional area.

Note. The asterisked items indicate retained items in the final 12-item scale. Items marked with (r) indicate a reverse-coded item.