

PROACTIVE BEHAVIOUR AS A MEDIATOR IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND CAREER SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT

Achieving career success among employees is a primary concern for both individuals and organisations. Career success acts as a powerful motivator for one to advance great progress, such as improving his or her job performance and achieving more success. Quality of work life is in accordance with various needs of individuals' well-beings in the workplace, which may promote career success. Additionally, instead of having knowledge and skills required, individuals should possess positive personalities and right attitude to ensure that they always exert their best endeavours to achieve career success. This study examined the mediating effect of proactive behavior on the relationship between quality of work life and career success. Self-administered surveys were employed for data collection among 304 married academicians from two selected Public Institutions of Higher Learning. Data were analysed by using Analysis Moment of Structures Software (AMOS) for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Results indicated that a partial mediation effect of proactive behaviour was established on the relationship between quality of work life and career success. It can be concluded that the quality of work life can positively influence career success among academicians. If they, however, also have proactive behaviour, they will be eagerly urged to achieve higher levels of career success.

Keywords: Quality of Work Life; Proactive Behaviour; Career Success.

1. INTRODUCTION

Achieving career success among employees is a primary concern for both individuals and organisations. This is because individuals' personal success leads to positive outcomes, including developing human resources and achieving organisational success. In Malaysian academic context, with the progression to a knowledge-based economy, academicians' performance plays a fundamental role in moving Malaysia forwards to become a knowledge-based society with high income economy. Some policies are being implemented by the government to emphasise on how

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important the quality of academic staff and their career success in education are today. For instance, the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) emphasises on talent excellence, in which academic staff can chart their own career success through alternative structured career pathways in order to excel in academic lives (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Besides, the management of academic institutions should maintain and improve the levels of the quality of work life in every academic institution so that academicians serving as the bedrocks of every academic institution are able to exhibit high performance. The quality of work life plays a prominent part in motivating individuals and improving job satisfaction among people. Employees, who receive proper wages, recognitions, and career developments, will feel that their contributions are valued by organisations because the autonomy and the trainings are provided to them. As a result, this may enhance their productivities, increase the quality of their working lives as well as boost the overall effectiveness of organisations. In addition, it is argued that proactive individuals are more successful in their careers. Highly proactive people strive to find positive opportunities and pursue them with grim determination to achieve their goals. Thus, this may help further their career success. However, once they fail to do so, they fall into negative emotions, such as dissatisfaction and depression because they have to face multiple stressful work roles and responsibilities as well as family and child-rearing responsibilities, and this may totally spoil their career lives. This could bring serious impacts on their psychological being and affect their desires to gain success. Therefore, positive thinking is important to promote academicians' motivations in order to achieve career success. This point is consistent with the suggestion that academicians should possess positive behaviour that will instigate them to act with optimism and find ways to ignite their motivations so as to achieve positive career outcomes (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). Hence, this study intends to examine how proactive behaviour intervenes the linkage between quality of work life and career success based on the Malaysia public universities context so that academic staff can focus on their career managements in order to develop their effective career plans and prompt excellent career developments.

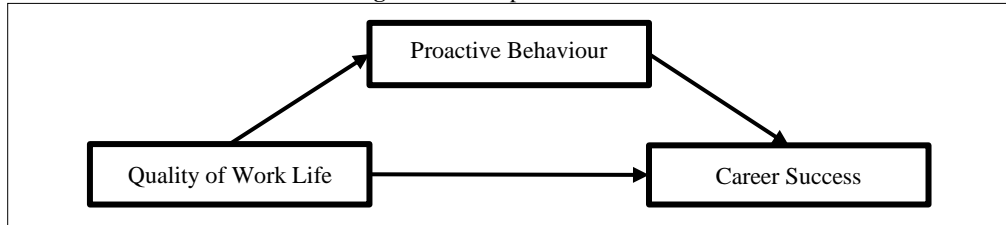
2. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1. *Social cognitive career theory*

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) can be used to explain career success of academicians by describing the influence of personality traits and features of work environments on career success. From the perspective of SCCT, learning experiences can be accumulated through the interaction between individuals and environments. Individuals' learning experiences can influence their career interests and their actions. Their career interests are oriented towards demonstrating proactive behaviour under supportive environmental situations which in turn benefit their career advancements. By having goal-specific environmental supports and resources, individuals will act proactively, exert efforts, and persist to achieve their career goals which may lead to ultimate success, such as increasing their job satisfactions. Apart from that, Lent and Brown (2006) stated that work features, environments, and outcomes have linkage with job satisfactions. People predict and assess their job satisfactions to the degree which the work condition encompasses characteristics to meet their needs. For instance, they have higher work values when they receive higher quality of work lives, including conducive work conditions, better health benefits, and greater rewards. This may lead to the expected career outcomes, such as contributing towards greater job satisfactions as the work environments become more favourable to their well-beings and their career growths. Thus, in this study, the research framework has been proposed according to the perspectives of SCCT exhibiting the

relationship between the quality of work life, the proactive behaviour, and the career success (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



2.2. *Proactive behaviour as a mediator of the quality of work life- career success relationship*

Instead of having knowledge and skills required, individuals should possess positive personalities and the right attitude so that they endeavour to do their best in gaining positive career outcomes. The main factor in achieving career success is that employees should possess positive traits, such as proactive career behaviour. As mentioned by Bateman and Crant (1993), the concept of proactive behaviour is described as an individual showing a stable disposition towards taking his or her own initiative to influence and change his or her work environment. Proactive individuals initiate change rather than passively accepting and adapting to change made. They challenge the difficulties met and seek for ways to transform such obstacles into useful opportunities that can prepare them to be more successful in their careers. The previous study done by Barnett and Bradley (2007) indicated that proactive behaviour mediates the relationship between organisational support and career success. Thus, the features of proactive behaviour may contribute significantly in mediating the relationship between quality of work life and career success. Hence, the following hypothesis is made:

Hypothesis 1: Proactive behaviour mediates the relationship between quality of work life and career success

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study was carried out to examine the mediating effect of proactive behavior on the relationship between quality of work life and career success. The unit of analysis of this study consisted of married academicians in the Malaysian Public Institutions of Higher Learning. The selection of the sample was carried out through a systematic random sampling method to ensure that the sample of the study presented the target population. A self-administered research questionnaire was employed to collect the data of the study. In overall, a total of 500 research questionnaires were randomly distributed among the married academicians in the two selected Malaysian Public Institutions of Higher Learning and 320 were returned back. Nevertheless, only 304 usable questionnaires were used for the final analysis that accounted for 60.8% of the response rate. A Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) software was used to perform the data analysis based on the conceptual framework of this research study. The main purpose of this statistical method is to model and predict relationships between constructs in the hypothesised manner. The research questionnaire employed in this study was adopted from the previous published literature. In specific, the quality of work life scale was adopted from Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel, and Lee (2001) that consisted of sixteen items;

the proactive behaviour scale was adopted from Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, and Tag (1997) that consisted of seven items; and career success scale was adopted from Dries, Pepermans, and Carlier (2008) and Dries, Van Loo, and Pepermans (2009) that consisted of 61 items. All questionnaire items were evaluated using a five-point response scale.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Data analysis

The proposed research framework of the study was tested using the structural equation modeling (SEM). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was first done to validate the measurement model as suggested by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010). Next, the structural model was tested to examine the hypothesised relationships between the latent variables in the proposed framework (Hair et al., 2010). The AMOS 23.0 program with the maximum likelihood estimation technique was applied in order to examine the strength of relationships among constructs as well as to measure the model suitability in this research study.

4.2. Convergent validity

The convergent validity was tested to confirm the validity and the reliability of the measurement model. As discussed by Hair et al. (2010), the convergent validity of the items for each construct should be assessed by using factor loadings of construct, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). The CFA findings of this study revealed that the standardised factor loadings of all items were more than 0.5 and were significant at the level of 0.01 as shown in Table 1. This indicates that the measurement model had good item reliability. The average variance extracted (AVE) value for each construct was also greater than the threshold of 0.50 (see Table 1). The composite reliability (CR) for all constructs exceeded the threshold value of 0.7 (see Table 1), and that shows a satisfactory internal consistency reliability of the measurement model. Hence, the results demonstrated satisfactory convergent validity of the latent constructs used in the proposed framework.

Table 1: Convergent Validity of the Measurement Model

Measures	Item	Factor loading (>0.5)	AVE (>0.5)	CR (>0.7)
Quality of work life (QWL)	Q1	0.536	0.523	0.882
	Q2	0.525		
	Q3	0.705		
	Q4	0.822		
	Q5	0.886		
	Q6	0.851		
	Q7	0.777		
	Q8	0.822		
	Q9	0.842		
	Q10	0.819		
	Q11	0.658		
	Q12	0.664		
	Q14	0.678		
	Q15	0.730		
	Q16	0.816		

Table 2: Convergent Validity of the Measurement Model (cont.)

Measures	Item	Factor loading (>0.5)	AVE (>0.5)	CR (>0.7)
Proactive behaviour (PB)	P3	0.704	0.533	0.818
	P4	0.787		
	P5	0.751		
	P6	0.597		
Career success (CS)	CS1	0.805	0.517	0.913
	CS2	0.744		
	CS3	0.783		
	CS4	0.654		
	CS6	0.603		
	CS9	0.638		
	CS11	0.806		
	CS12	0.849		
	CS13	0.812		
	CS15	0.668		
	CS16	0.700		
	CS17	0.773		
	CS18	0.811		
	CS21	0.578		
	CS22	0.900		
	CS23	0.867		
	CS25	0.622		
	CS26	0.814		
	CS27	0.708		
	CS28	0.589		
	CS29	0.637		
	CS32	0.647		
	CS33	0.807		
	CS34	0.753		
	CS35	0.715		
	CS36	0.720		
	CS38	0.834		
	CS39	0.772		
	CS40	0.761		
	CS41	0.547		
	CS43	0.765		
CS44	0.863			
CS45	0.798			
CS47	0.680			
CS49	0.587			
CS51	0.715			
CS52	0.729			
CS53	0.826			
CS54	0.750			
CS57	0.867			
CS58	0.871			
CS59	0.825			
CS61	0.749			

Notes: Q13, P1, P2, P7, CS5, CS7, CS8, CS10, CS14, CS19, CS20, CS24, CS30, CS31, CS37, CS42, CS46, CS48, CS50, CS55, CS56, and CS60 were deleted due to low factor loading. AVE= average variance extracted; CR= composite reliability.

4.3. Discriminant validity

As suggested by Hair et al. (2010), the discriminant validity can be measured by comparing the square root of constructs average variance extracted (AVE) with the corresponding correlations among other constructs. The findings of this study revealed that the estimates for all constructs were strongly associated with their own measures compared with any other constructs in the model. Based on Table 2, the bolded or diagonal elements represent the square roots of the AVE and the non-bolded or off-diagonal elements represent the inter-correlation value among constructs. In order to achieve a discriminant validity of the construct, all the diagonal elements should be larger than off-diagonal elements. The results showed that there was a high level of the discriminant validity as all the off-diagonal elements were lower than the diagonal elements. This provides a strong support for the constructs in the proposed framework to be considered as adequate as they have obtained the convergent validity and the discriminant validity.

Table 3: Convergent and Discriminant Validity Coefficients

Constructs	AVE	QWL	PB	CS
1. QWL	0.523	0.723		
2. PB	0.533	0.500	0.730	
3. CS	0.517	0.700	0.600	0.719

Notes: Average variance extracted (AVEs) are shown (in bold) on diagonal. AVE= average variance extracted; QWL=quality of work life; PB= proactive behaviour; CS= career success.

4.4. Test of the structural model

The fit indices were used to measure the overall fit of the structural model in this study. The results showed that except for the χ^2 measure, all values slightly satisfied the recommended level of acceptable fit, such as $\chi^2 = 3816.071$ ($p < 0.05$), the ratio of χ^2 to its degree of freedom (χ^2/df) = 2.112, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.061, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.810, incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.812, and tucker lewis index (TLI) = 0.802. As the sample size exceeded 200, thus the χ^2 measure indicated significant differences (Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, the results were considered to be demonstrating a good fit for the structural model and yielding a significantly better fit for the sample data.

H1 tests the mediation effect of the proactive behaviour on the relationship between quality of work life and career success. The indirect effect of quality of work life on career success via proactive behaviour was found to be significant ($p < 0.05$). In order to test this mediation effect, the mediation model is compared with the direct model. The main purpose of this comparison is to determine

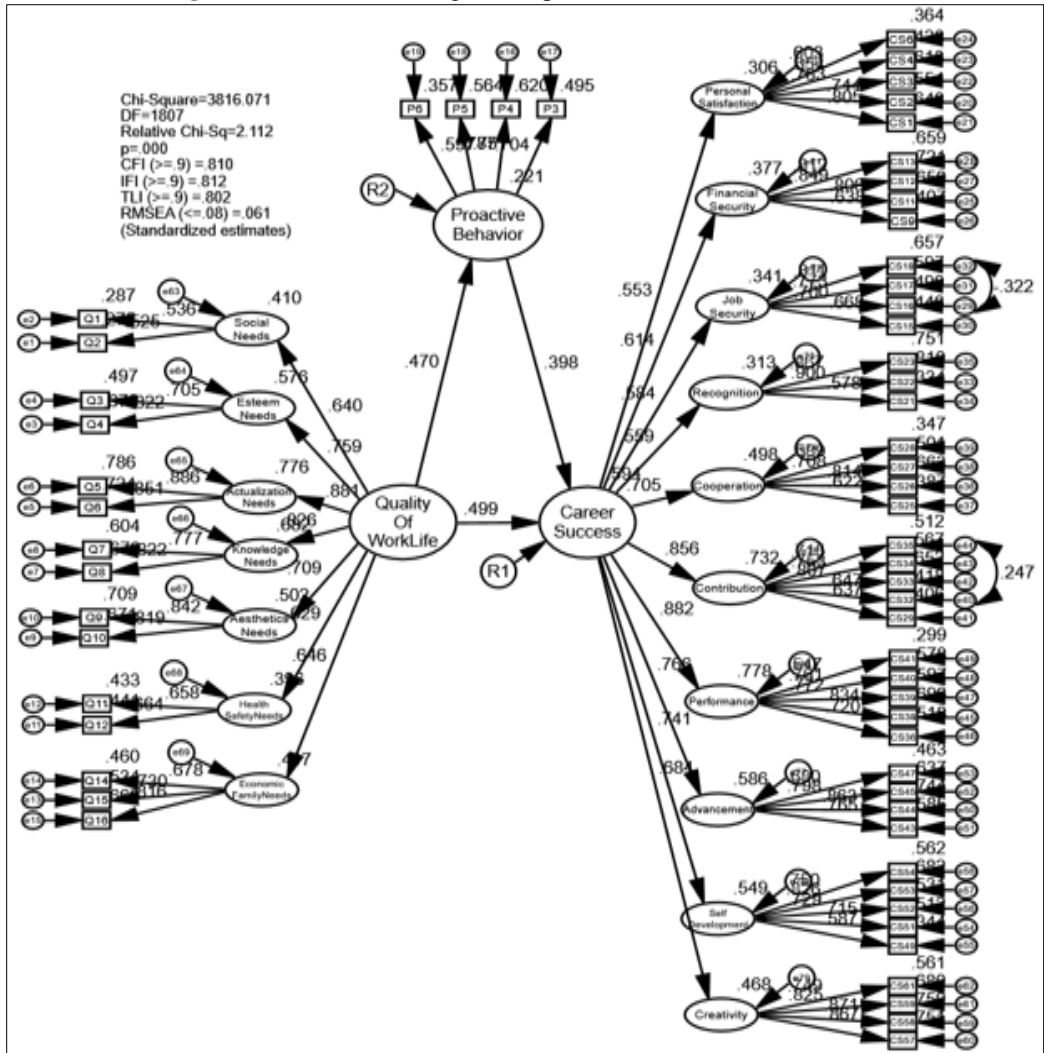
Table 3: Results of Mediation Test for Proactive Behaviour on Relationship between Quality of Work Life and Career Success

Construct	Estimate	S.E.	β	C.R.	p
<i>Direct Model</i>					
QWL → CS	0.667	0.144	0.692	4.624	.000
<i>Mediation Model</i>					
QWL → CS	0.469	0.110	0.499	4.248	.000
QWL → PB	0.877	0.196	0.470	4.480	.000
PB → CS	0.201	0.038	0.398	5.236	.000

Notes: Estimate=regression weight; S.E.= standard error; β = standardized regression weights; C.R.= critical ratio; p = significance value; QWL= quality of work life; CS= career success, PB= proactive behaviour.

whether the beta (β) and the significance of the direct path in the direct model (quality of work life \rightarrow career success) would be reduced and become insignificant in the mediation model. The result indicated that the beta (β) in the mediation model at 0.499 was lower and become significant compared to the beta (β) in the direct model at 0.692. Thus, a partial mediation effect was established as shown in Table 3.

Figure 1: Results of Testing the Proposed Model (Mediation Model)



5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study has contributed to the career literature by showing the proactive behaviour partially mediates the relationship between quality of work life and career success. A better quality of work

life for academicians is more likely to develop more proactive behaviour, which then leads to desirable career outcomes, such as career success. This result is consistent with the previous study conducted by Abu Said, Mohd Rasdi, Abu Samah, Silong, and Sulaiman (2015), which found out that the factor of proactive behaviour is a supportive mechanism for career success. This result also supports the SCCT which explains that highly proactive individuals are more likely to take active roles to manage and develop their own careers. This may, therefore, facilitate greater success for them.

This study provides a novel view of the relevance of quality of work life among married academicians' success via proactive behaviour. Higher education providers and practitioners should pay special attentions to academicians' proactive behaviour as this appears to play a positive role in mediating the relationship between quality of work life and career success. Thus, effective strategies pertaining to the best quality of work life programs should be implemented to assist the academicians in strengthening their academicians' roles. As a result, this may encourage academicians to behave proactively in managing their career development, achieving desirable career outcomes, and working more efficiently and effectively. They would also be more motivated to actively take advantage on the opportunities given to benefit their career progressions in order to deal with pressurised and consistently changing work environments. This can possibly lead to enhance organisational performance. It can be concluded that the quality of work life can positively influence career success among academicians. If they, however, also have proactive behaviour, they will be eagerly urged to achieve higher levels of career success. Despite the significant findings revealed by this research, nevertheless, it is considered relevant only in the context of academicians. Therefore, the researchers suggest that future research should be conducted to determine the relevance of proactive behaviour towards career success in other fields. Furthermore, this research study only examined the mediating role of proactive behavior in the relationship between quality of work life and career success among academic staff. Although the factor of proactive behaviour was found to explain the link between quality of work life and career success, it only acted as a partial mediator. Thus, future studies could examine other mediating variables such as organisational trust in order to provide a complete explanation of the relationship between quality of work life and career success.

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