

Career Commitment & Career Success: Mediating Role of Career Satisfaction

P.B. Srikanth & D. Israel

While past evidence has supported the relationship of career commitment and career success, career success and career satisfaction, career commitment and career satisfaction, there has been no study conducted to relate all these three concepts. The present study seeks to study the influence of career commitment on career success with the mediating role of career satisfaction.

P.B. Srikanth (Email: srikant.pb@tcs.com) is Doctoral Scholar & **D. Israel** (Email: disrael@xlri.ac.in) is Associate Professor, School of Business & Human Resources, XLRI, Jamshedpur 8310135.

Introduction

Career success continues to be seen as an area of interest and exploration both in academia and practice. Career success is an evaluative concept based on individual perceptions associated with the term itself (Judge et al., 1999). London and Stumpf (1982) defined career success as the positive psychological or work related outcomes or achievements one has accumulated as a result of one's work experiences. Modern careers are being characterized by high degree of uncertainty due to changing environment. This has led to newer relationship between employers and employees being introduced (Park, 2010). Thus, careers have been described in fundamentally two different ways. Firstly, they can be described as being subjective reflections of the individual's own sense of his or her meaning derived from career. Secondly, they can be described as being objective reflections of the more observable positions, salary and status that serve as standards of gauging progress in society. Using the subjective standard for career success is one of the imperative characteristics of the contemporary career. Thus, modern career has empha-

sized the importance of subjective criteria for measuring career success (Heslin, 2005).

While, objective career success has been defined in terms of ascendancy and salary progression, subjective career success has been defined in terms of learning, balancing work and family, career actualization, the degree to which employees are capable of realizing personal goals and values in their working career; quality of education received, role performed in the organization, career reflection and alignment of one's values to one's career. This has led to different criteria for evaluating them. To bridge the gap in academia and workplace by exploring subjective career success, the present study aims to study the effect of career commitment on career satisfaction with the mediating effect of career satisfaction. It argues that the effects of career commitment on career success can be facilitated by career satisfaction. Employees who exhibit high career commitment would increase their satisfaction to attain career success as opposed to those who are less committed and less satisfied.

Subjective Career Success

Today's emerging careers are characterized by high degree of mobility and unpredictability (Park, 2010), thus subjective careers been a critical area of research. Gattiker and Larwood (1986) sighted that unlike objective success criteria, subjective measures may detect important career outcomes that are not readily assessable from personnel records or by expert raters. They also indicated

that Subjective Career Success is more of an internal perspective that refers to an individual's own disposition for development in a chosen occupation or profession. Subjective Career Success refers to individuals' evaluation of their career progress, accomplishments and anticipated outcomes, relative to their own goals and aspirations (Seibert et al., 2001). Previous studies have suggested that the term refers to the individual's evaluation of his or her own career on the basis of self-defined standards, aspirations and career stage (Gattiker & Larwood, 1986). Judge et al. (1995) defined career success as "the psychological or work related outcomes accumulated as a result of one's experience." Since subjective career success is based on personal evaluation of outcomes associated with one's career, it is quite plausible that many successful individuals may not feel accomplished despite having high salaries or holding influential positions in organizations. The subjective outcomes of career success such as career accomplishments or career mentoring are, therefore, relatively more internally assessed by individuals' own subjective judgments of career success (Poon, 2004; Aryee et al., 1994). Internal career success is frequently defined by psychological success which comes from the individual's feeling of pride associated with accomplishment of personal and professional goals in life such as achievement, inner peace and family happiness (Hall, 1996), and is judged by the self rather than the organization (Gattiker & Larwood, 1986). There are no specific guidelines to evaluate career success since the criteria vary with individu-

als and there is increased influence of modern society to give more emphasis on individual career aspiration, goals and interests. Subjective career success encompasses reactions to both objective (e.g. pay) and subjective (e.g. fulfillment) facets of one's career (Heslin, 2005). He also mentions that as a person progresses in one's career self and other referent criteria are different, e.g. when an individual's reaction of receiving a pay hike changes upon hearing about a similar hike received by his/her peers or when the individual discovers his/her parent's attitude towards his/her career; thereby making a difference between the self and other-referent criteria.

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Career Commitment

Career Commitment may be defined as "one's attitude towards one's profession or vocation (Blau, 1985). Career Commitment is characterized by strong sense of identification, persuasion, development and active involvement in individual career goals. In other words, it is commitment to one's career goals (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990). Unlike organization goals, these are self generated; commitment in one's career can lead to employment in various organizations. In other words an individual may be committed to his/her career only or to his/her organization or committed to both or nei-

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ther of them. Career Commitment or Occupational Commitment has also been conceptualized in three approaches (Meyer et al., 1993). The first deals with affective commitment to an individual's career based on strong desire to remain in the same profession. Such individuals might choose to read/ subscribe to journals or books pertaining to their area of profession, participating in conferences. The second is concerned with normative commitment with a sense of obligation to remain in the chosen profession and the third with continuance commitment which is concerned with high costs associated with leaving the occupation. Meyer et al, (1993) clarified that the terms occupation, profession, and career have been used somewhat interchangeably in the commitment literature. Past studies conducted suggested that individual differences and situational characteristics greatly influenced career commitment. Career commitment can be related to one's work commitment that can favorably lead to desirable outcomes associated with one's career. Individuals with a strong sense of career commitment and increased levels of career expectations may make significant investments in their careers (Aryee & Tan, 1992), thus would be willing to commit extra efforts required to attain their career goals (e.g. acquire job relevant knowledge and skills through specific

trainings or courses) through which they can increase their scope for advancement. Additionally, people who are committed to their career will likely set high career goals for themselves and put forth effort as well as persist in pursuing these goals even in the face of obstacles and setbacks (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990).

Individuals with a strong sense of career commitment and increased levels of career expectations may make significant investments in their careers.

There is empirical evidence that supports the relationship of career commitment with career satisfaction and career success. Poon (2004) provided evidence that career commitment predicted career success. Individuals who are committed to their careers should experience strong subjective career success (e.g. alignment of individuals' values to one's career, sense of identity with one's career, positive feelings) in comparison to those who are less committed. Kidd and Green (2006) found that career commitment and organizational commitment are some of the determinants of career success. Career commitment represents a form of commitment towards one's career that could lead to favorable career outcomes. Carson et al. (1999) found that medical librarians high on career commitment displayed high career satisfaction in comparison to those who displayed low career commitment. Individuals who are committed to their career are more likely to set high career goals for themselves and put more effort and pursue these

goals despite obstacles and setbacks (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990). Similarly, Poon (2004) found that career commitment predicted objective career success in the form of salary level and subjective career success in the form of career satisfaction. Career Commitment was found to predict Career Success among individuals who had moderate levels of self efficacy (Ballout, 2009). In his study Ballout (2009) found that career commitment predicted subjective career success. His findings suggested career commitment was positively related to salary level and career satisfaction among individuals who have at least moderate levels of self-efficacy. Hence, we propose the hypothesis:

H1: Career Commitment will be positively related to Subjective Career Success.

Individuals demonstrating high degree of career commitment and higher levels of career expectations may make significant investment in pursuit of their careers (Aryee & Tan, 1992). Such individuals should be willing to exert great effort to accomplish their career goals and gain satisfaction with their careers. Carson et al. (1999) found linkage between career commitment and organizational commitment to work related outcomes and individuals who rated highly on career commitment also experienced higher career satisfaction compared to those who rated themselves low on career commitment. Ballout (2009) found that career commitment had significant influence of career satisfaction through the moderation effect of self efficacy.

Thus, individuals with higher levels of career commitment and self efficacy reported higher levels of career satisfaction. People who are committed to their careers should experience more subjective career success (e.g. have more positive feelings for the career) than those who are less committed (Poon, 2004). Similarly, Day and Allen (2004) found career commitment to be positively related to career satisfaction in the case of municipal employees.

Thus, we hypothesize:

H2: Career Commitment will be positively related to Career Satisfaction.

Career Satisfaction

Low performance ratings, low overall ranking, less challenging assignments, less responsibilities, less recognition compared to other fellow colleagues can lead to low Career Satisfaction among managers.

Jen-Ruei Fu (2010) defined Career Satisfaction as the level of overall happiness experienced through one's choice of career. Career Satisfaction may be attributed to development of competencies associated with one's job that may provide an opportunity for career advancements. Managers' advancement by way of career outcomes is defined externally while managers' level of Career Satisfaction is an internally defined outcome (Greenhaus et al., 1990). In other words, low performance ratings, low overall ranking, less challenging assign-

ments, less responsibilities, less recognition compared to other fellow colleagues can lead to low Career Satisfaction among managers.

Mediating Role of Career Satisfaction

Career Satisfaction has been seen to influence both Career Commitment and Career Success. Intrinsic job outcomes like subjective Career Success are influenced by Career Satisfaction, Career Mentoring, Career Commitment and perceptions of Career Success (Poon, 2004). Jen-Ruei Fu (2010) found that Career Satisfaction among IT professions was the most important determinant of their career commitment. Career Satisfaction that is associated with attainment of one's career goals increases commitment towards one's career since they are associated with positive career outcomes. Aryee and Tan (1992) found that there was a significant influence of Career Satisfaction on Career Commitment. Ng et al. (2005) pointed out that people evaluated their Career Success through different mechanisms including their satisfaction with their careers and how their career has progressed relative to others. Hall (1971) suggested that Career Commitment was influenced by the extent to which an individual feels that he/she is competent and successful in their career. Myrtle et al., (2011) found that satisfaction with one's career had a direct impact on Career Commitment among health care executives. They found that organizational and inter organizational changes created opportunities for people to find Career Satisfaction by moving

into sectors that offered more challenges which in turn influenced Career Commitment. In a study of careers of women in nine countries Punnett et al. (2007) found that Career Satisfaction influenced Career Success. Aryee and Debrah (1993) reported that Career Satisfaction which reflected orientation towards achieving one's career roles were closely associated with self esteem that influenced Career Commitment. They concluded that Career Satisfaction revealed significant direct effect on Career Commitment. Deborah et al (2004) study of women's career types (Navigators, Achievers & Accommodators) revealed that different individual level outcomes influenced Career Satisfaction and sources of Career Success. They found that career types utilizing subjective Career Success definitions may experience as much satisfaction from their Career Success as career types using objective Career Success definitions may experience from their Career Success. More satisfied employees are also more committed to their ca-

reers (Goulet & Singh, 2001). They found that employees who were satisfied with their job involvement were the ones who were more committed to the organization and were more satisfied with their jobs and hence were more committed to their careers. Thus we hypothesize:

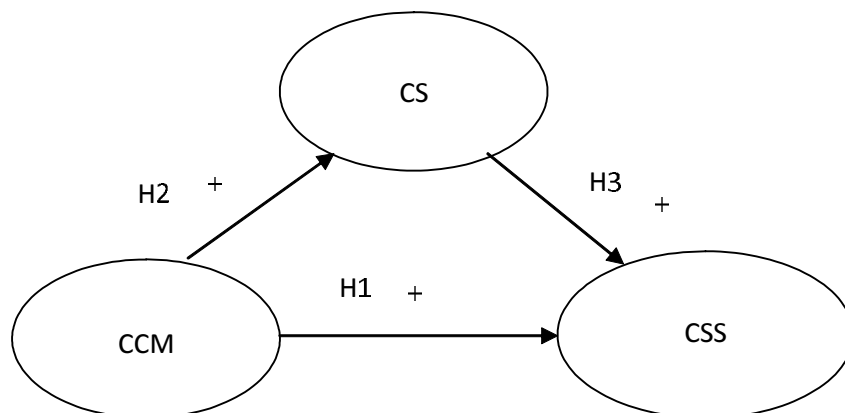
H3: Career Satisfaction will significantly mediate the relationship between Career Commitment and subjective Career Success.

More satisfied employees are also more committed to their careers.

Measures

Career Commitment: As in previous studies (Aryee & Tan, 1992; Goulet & Singh, 2001) Career Commitment was measured using (Blau, 1985) 8-item Career Commitment scale. Items are anchored from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. Some of the items in-

Fig. 1: Relation among the Variables under Study



CCM – Career Commitment; CS – Career Satisfaction; CSS – Subjective Career Success.

cluded are statements such as: “This is an ideal vocation for a life work” and “I like this vocation too well to give it up”. This scale is still widely used to measure Career Commitment in the literature.

Career Satisfaction: Consistent with previous studies (Aryee & Luk, 1996; Aryee et al., 1994) was measured using (Greenhaus et al., 1990) 5-item measurement. They reported a coefficient alpha of 0.88 for their scale and such scale was/still the most widely used measure in the career literature. Items on the questionnaire will be measured using a rating scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. Some of the questions asked were “How successful has your career been?” “Compared to your co-workers, how successful is your career?” The vast majority of studies measuring Career Satisfaction use this scale.

Subjective Career Success was measured using Perceived Career Success scale (Turban & Dougherty, 1994) 4-items scale having coefficient alpha of 0.87. Response categories ranged from considerably below average-1 to considerably above average-5. For subsequent analyses, groups with scores above the median were designated as the high self-perceived success group, and those scoring below were designated as the low self-perceived success group. Some of

the questions asked were: “How successful has your career been?” “Compared to your co-workers, how successful is your career?” The Perceived Career Success scale has been regarded as one of the most widely used measures in the Subjective Career Success literature (Judge et al., 1995, Park, 2010).

Data Collection

We contacted the HR departments of Manufacturing, IT and ITES organizations and explained to them the purpose of the study. Due permission was taken prior to conducting the study from the managements of these organizations. We requested them to gather small groups of employees on a pre-decided date and time when we explained the purpose of the study to the employees. A covering note was also enclosed along with the questionnaire. We administered the questionnaire in person and collected the completed responses directly from the employees on the same day. The respondents were assured of anonymity of their responses and were told that the study is being conducted solely for academic purpose. Table1 indicates actual response rate.

After considering incomplete responses, the actual response rate for the survey was 79.52%. Responding managers and non- managers were with diverse

Table 1 Actual Response Rate

Target Population contacted	Responded	No Response	Response Incomplete	Total Response Rate	Actual Response Rate
293	233	23	37	92.15%	79.52%

backgrounds, age and experience. Out of 293 employees contacted, 113 respondents were from ITES, 96 from IT & 84 from Manufacturing. 58.37% of the respondents were from non-managerial positions and remaining 41.63% were from managerial positions. 38.19% of the respondents were with engineering background, 35.19% of them were ordinary graduates and 26.61% were post graduates. 46.35% of the respondents were females.

Analysis & Results

Reliability of the scales was checked using Corrected Item Total Co-relation and all items showing item-total co-relation less than 0.5 were discarded according to Brut-Banks criterion ($p < 0.001$). The results of reliability measures are presented in Table 2. Results of factor analysis, carried out separately for each of the three constructs to ensure uni-dimensionality of the scales, are presented in Table 3. This was followed by Multiple Regression Analysis carried out for the summated scores to test the influence of causal variables on the criterion variables based on Barron and Kenny (1986) (Table 4). Finally, Sobel Test was used to calculate the significance of mediation effect (Table 5).

Regression with career commitment as independent variable and career success as dependent variable resulted in significant association between the variables ($F = 219.48$, $p < 0.0001$, Std. $\beta = 0.696$)

$$\text{Career Success} = a + \beta * \text{Career Commitment} + e$$

- 1) Regression with career commitment as independent variable and career satisfaction as dependent variable resulted in significant association between the variables ($F = 195.38$, $p < 0.0001$, Std $\beta = 0.675$)

$$\text{Career Satisfaction} = a + \beta * \text{Career Commitment} + e$$

- 2) Regression with career satisfaction as independent variable and career success as dependent variable resulted in significant association between the variables ($F = 256.46$, $p < 0.0001$, Std $\beta = 0.723$)

$$\text{Career Success} = a + \beta * \text{Career Satisfaction} + e$$

- 3) Multiple regression with Career Satisfaction and Career Commitment as independent variables and Career Success as dependent variable resulted in significant association among the variables ($F = 176.37$, $p < 0.0001$, Std $\beta = 0.382$ and 0.466 for Career Satisfaction and Career Commitment respectively)

$$\text{Career Success} = a + \beta * \text{Career Satisfaction} + r * \text{Career Commitment} + e$$

The purpose of steps 1-3 was to establish that zero-order relationships among the variables exist. If one or more of these relationships are non-significant, one can conclude that mediation is not possible.

Table 2 Reliability Analysis Report

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach a
Career Satisfaction	5	0.816
Career Commitment	8	0.849
Career Success	4	0.880

Table 3 Results of Factor Analysis using Principal Component Analysis

Items	Communalities	Eigen Values	Percentage Variance Explained	Cumulative percentage Variance Explained
CSS1	0.656	2.893	57.852	57.852
CSS2	0.519	0.664	13.286	71.138
CSS3	0.455	0.629	12.584	83.721
CSS4	0.624	0.511	10.212	93.934
CSS5	0.639	0.303	6.066	100.000
CCM1*	0.552	3.934	49.175	49.175
CCM2	0.470	0.916	11.446	60.621
CCM3*	0.562	0.674	8.425	69.046
CCM4	0.431	0.635	7.939	76.985
CCM5	0.431	0.542	6.771	83.756
CCM6	0.495	0.497	6.212	89.968
CCM7	0.574	0.439	5.485	95.453
CCM8*	0.519	0.364	4.547	100.000
CSS1	0.702	2.737	68.425	68.425
CSS2	0.728	0.507	12.663	81.088
CSS3	0.674	0.433	10.828	91.916
CSS4	0.633	0.323	8.084	100.000

Note: * indicates reverse coded items, CSS – Career Satisfaction, CCM – Career Commitment, CSS – Career Success

Table 4 Results of Barron & Kenny Test

Steps	Variables	Significance	B	Adjusted R ²
1	Career Commitment predicting Career Satisfaction	0.000	0.509	0.453
2	Career Commitment predicting Career Success	0.000	0.455	0.462
3	Career Satisfaction predicting Career Success	0.000	0.627	0.521
4	Career Commitment and Career Satisfaction predicting Career Success	0.000	0.249	0.599
		0.000	0.404	

From the results shown in Table 4, we conclude that:

- 1) Impact of Career Commitment on Career Success is statistically significant. ($R^2= 0.598$, $p<0.0001$), thus H1 is supported.
- 2) Impact of Career Commitment on Career Satisfaction is statistically significant ($R^2= 0.636$, $p<0.0001$), thus H2 is supported.
- 3) Impact of Career Satisfaction on Career Success is statistically significant ($R^2= 0.561$, $p<0.0001$), thus H3 is supported.
- 4) In presence of Career Satisfaction, Career Commitment is still statistically significant implying partial mediation by Career Satisfaction. ($R^2= 0.602$, $p<0.0001$).

Table 5 Sobel Test for Mediation Analysis

Model	A	B	Sa	Sb	Z-Statistics	p value
CC – CS - CSS	0.249	0.404	0.037	0.048	5.256	0.00000

Where,

A = Unstandardized coefficient in Step 2 of the Barron and Kenny Test.

Sa = Standard error in Step 2 of the Barron and Kenny Test.

B = Unstandardized coefficient in Step 3 of the Barron and Kenny Test.

Sb = Standard error in Step 3 of the Barron and Kenny Test.

Since the value of Sobel’s Z-Statistic is greater than the critical value of 1.96, it can be inferred that the mediation effect is statistically significant for all the three models.

Implications

Under modified employment contracts individuals are likely to pursue careers that

focus on their individual development and increase their employability rather than look for job security. Goulet and Singh (2001) indicated that employers need to re-evaluate whether potential employees’ career aspirations match the job requirements and organization goals. To enhance the career success prospects of managerial employees, organizations need to come up with career ladders that would replace upward mobility with innovative schemes like lateral transfers, job enrichment (Aryee et al., 1994) or role enhancements. At a time when the meaning of Career Success is expanding among the employees, it is imperative that organizations provide opportunities for development and fulfillment of the subjective criteria of success in order to attract and retain talent. Employees could be expected to shift their focus from commitment to the organization to commitment to their career. In view of this, organizations must ensure that employees perceive alignment of organizational goals as

being instrumental for the development of their personal career.

Employers need to re-evaluate whether potential employees' career aspirations match the job requirements and organization goals.

Career counselors and human resource managers need to incorporate an employee's own assessment of his/her Career Success when attempting career development. "Fast tracks" based on specific qualifications may ultimately prove less beneficial for both the individual and the organization than individually tailored career paths, e.g., by altering certain components of the job like day to day decision making could allow the individual to implement his/her knowledge and skills directly to take the decisions thereby substantially increasing the commitment towards one job and career. Another example could be to have a separate career path for individuals who are more oriented technically and give them the role of a Subject Matter Expert rather than put him in a general management career path having people responsibilities. Individual careers can be mapped to roles within the organization rather than designations to build employee commitment leading to career success. Organizations need to redefine themselves as not only institutions where people come for work but also to develop and build their careers.

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Limitations & Direction for Future Research

The current study has a number of limitations. Common method variance has not been assessed.

The sample was taken from IT, ITES and manufacturing companies based in India. Samples from diverse industries can be taken to make the results more generalizable. Since this was a co-relational study, no comments can be made regarding the causality. In the past, researchers have used Career Satisfaction as a measure of Subjective Career Success which has most often been operationalized as Job Satisfaction or Career Satisfaction (Heslin, 2003; Ng et al., 2005). To firmly establish the directionality between Career Satisfaction and Career Success would require a longitudinal research design. Similar studies can be conducted using the three variables with their impact on Objective Career Success as well. Higher level analysis like Structured Equation Modeling can be used to study the relationship among the variables. Aryee et al (1994) suggested that Career Satisfaction was also a measure of Subjective Career Success. Their findings suggested that competence which was related to Career Satisfaction significantly influenced Subjective Career Success. Therefore, future research

needs to re-look at the meaning of Subjective Career Success and assess whether it is a construct or is a measure of Career Success. The nature of subjective career success, as well as the causal relationship between different objective and subjective career outcomes needs to be explored at greater depth (Heslins, 2005). Current study was carried out in India. Future studies can explore relationship among these variables in other kinds of industries using multi source data to rule out the possibility of common method bias. Different methods of data collection can be used to find the effect of common method variance. Exploratory research also showed that there were studies that demonstrated the influence of career success on career satisfaction and career commitment (Aryee et al., 1994, 1996, Seibert and Kramer 2001). There is also evidence showing influence of career success on career commitment (Johnson and Stokes, 2002) and Career Commitment on Career Satisfaction (Carson et al., 1999). Based on the above observations, future studies can measure impact of the variables using a rival model.

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