

Role of Impression Management: Career Commitment and Subjective Career Success

Dr. Manoranjan Biswas

Executive Director, MECON Limited

Abstract

The study attempts to understand the underlying mechanism for strengthening employee performance and subjective career success of employees. Pre-existing questionnaire for data collection through convenience sampling was used in the study. Data were collected from a total of 326 employees working in service industry such as banking, information technology and insurance industry functioning in India. The study used structural equation modelling for analysis of the data. The result of the study shows a significant and positive relationship between employee performance and subjective career success of employees. The result also shows an essential role played by impression management for strengthening the relationship between employee performance and subjective career success of employees. The study attempts to understand the importance of employee career commitment that supports employee subjective career success with the moderating impact of impression management that have seemingly not been researched.

Keywords: Career commitment, subjective career success, impression management, service sector.

Introduction

Research literature has focused on the elements that contribute to employee career success (e.g., Ng et al., 2005; Wei et al., 2012; Seibert et al., 2001; Singh et al., 2009). According to Seibert et al. (1999), subjective career success is defined as the psychological or work-related results attained as a result of labour. How dedicated individuals are to achieving their career goal is a crucial component of human capital that significantly affects career results. In order to understand the conceptualization, antecedents, and consequences, a number of academics argued to pay more attention to subjective career success (Kundi et al., 2020; Blokker et al., 2019; Ng and Feldman, 2014). Subjective career success is defined as perceived career accomplishments within an organization (Kundi et al., 2020).

People with high degree of career commitment often create personal career goals, work hard and display persistency to achieve those career goals (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990; Zhu et al., 2020). So, for determining the causes of subjective career success the study focused on professional commitment. Career commitment has mostly been studied in the literature on vocational psychology than academics (Zhu et al., 2020; Katz et al., 2019). According to Colarelli and Bishop (1990), career commitment shows the magnitude to which an individual identifies with and actively participates in their professional development. It is associated with increased employability and career success (van der Heijden et al., 2022).

Furthermore, researches have emphasized to find out significant employee-related strategies for achieving subjective career success (Ng et al., 2005; Wei et al., 2012; Seibert et al., 2001). As a result,

the study looked for moderating factor- impression management in the association between career commitment and perceived career success. In practicality, the term "face work" refers to impression control and self-image projection. In real or imagined social interactions, impression management refers to efforts to intentionally or inadvertently affect how people perceive a person's image (Schlender, 1980; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Such an action helps display oneself in the workplace, create positive image and shows the contributions made for the organization.

Hypotheses

Employee career commitment and subjective career success

Employee engagement with their work and profession is referred to as career commitment. Employees who are dedicated to their company, however, are not always dedicated to their careers. So, commitment to one's career often leads to prioritize one's work than peers, working conditions and organization. Committed people are likely to stick with the company to advance their careers, even in the face of high organizational job discontent (Ceick et al., 2016). High-commitment individuals typically establish ambitious objectives for their careers and put forth great effort to attain them in spite of setbacks and setbacks (Sultana et al., 2016). The likelihood of job success is higher for those who are really dedicated to their work. The level of satisfaction with ones' profession is the measure of subjective career success. Success in the workplace can be viewed as a genuine professional accomplishment and is frequently regarded as a career objective. Accordingly, companies typically keep successful workers—that is, people who are able to advance in their careers and perform in ways that benefit the company (Ceick et al., 2016). It is possible to think of subjective professional success as a set of standards that a person establishes for their experience and is dependent on how satisfied they are with their own career. According to Pathardikar et al. (2016), workers who are more committed to their careers usually report more fulfilling work outcomes, which raise SCS. Additionally, such employees are likely to feel good about their professional development and goal achievement. According to Kim and Beehr (2017), high committed employees typically establish ambitious goals and work hard to succeed. Additionally, they have a strong desire to succeed in their subjective careers. High-commitment workers frequently have a clear professional strategy and objective, which makes them more receptive to learning new things that, advances their careers.

H1: Employee career commitment is positively associated with subjective career success

Employee career commitment, impression management and subjective career success

Effective impression management execution creates a positive image of employees before managers (Huang et al., 2013). It makes employees seem more worthy and committed (Bonner et al., 2017). Impression management strategies also influence performance reviews and interview choices laying a solid base that is essential for professional success and growth (Kramer & Harris, 2020; Peck & Levashina, 2017). According to Judge and Bretz (1994), professional performance is positively correlated with supervisor-focused ingratiation. But only few studies have looked at the career implications of impression management and none have looked into how employees' subjective career success may be impacted by using impression management tactics (Judge and Bretz, 1994). Career success has been defined as “the ultimate outcome of a career (Spurk et al., 2019, p. 37).” Organisational research has shown that people use impression management to accomplish their desired goals in the workplace (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Bolino et al., 2016). Self-enhancement is a significant impression

management motive; therefore employees use impression management to improve their self-image (Leary, 1995).

H2: Impression management moderates the relationship between employee career commitment and intrinsic career success

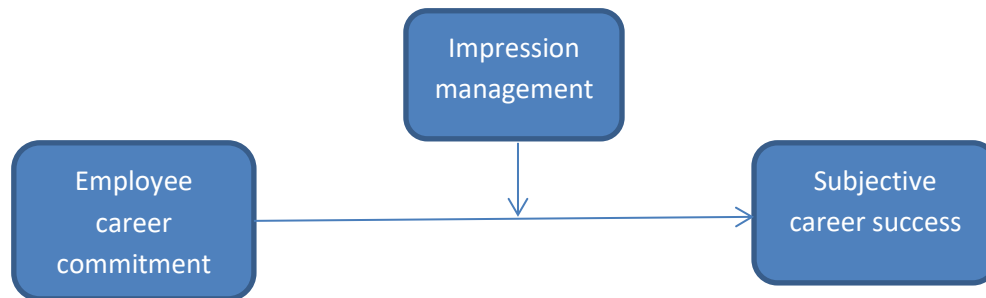


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Methods

Procedure and sample

In order to contact the intended respondents, the study used the snowball sampling technique. The management and non-managerial staff of service industries operating in India, including banking, information technology, and insurance, received an online survey using Google Form. Hair et al. (2010) recommended a minimum of 10 samples for each item, which was adhered to determine the sample size. The results of the data have been presented in aggregated form to preserve anonymity and confidentiality.

Measures:

Pre-established questionnaire with Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 denotes strongly disagree and 5 denotes strongly agree were used in the study. The details of measures are shown in Table 2.

Employee career commitment: it was measured using the 8-item scale developed by Bhawna et al., (2024).

Subjective career success: It was measured using a 4-item scale developed by Turban et al., 1994.

Impression management: Impression management tactics were assessed using 22-item scale developed by Bolino and Turnley's (1999).

Results

Out of 482 questionnaires that was sent, only 326 useable sample with 53.7percent females and 46.3percent males were derived. Of this sample, 23.3percent of the respondents were having 0-3 years of work experience, and 36.3percent, 26.2percent and 14.2percent of the respondents were having 3-7 years, 7- 10 years, and above 10 years of work experience in the current organization. Likewise, 61.5percent, 24.2percent and 14.3percent of the respondents were having bachelor, master and doctorates degrees. Similarly, 20.9percent of respondents were at junior level, 41percent were at middle level and 38.20percent were at senior levels respectively.

All the hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling (SEM) using AMOS 24. For examining the descriptive statistics and correlation matrix SPSS 24 was used in the study. The analysis of the data was done using 95percent of confidence level that is 5percent level of significance. The

mean, standard deviation, correlation matrix and square root value of average variance explained (AVE) [for assessment of discriminant validity] for all the constructs are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation and correlation matrix (along with square root of average variance explained- AVE)

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	CC	SCG	IM
CC	326	2.934	0.527	0.704#		
SCG	326	3.655	0.681		0.734#	
IM	326	2.323	0.634		0.459**	0.835#

Notes: # Square root of AVE; *p-value <0.05; **p-value<0.01; CC= Career commitment; SCG= Subjective career success; IM= Impression management

Assessment of measurement model

To determine the connections between the latent variable and the measurements, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to analyse the measurement model. All of the variables' factor loadings were higher than the 0.7 acceptable minimum range. Similarly, the model fit values obtained are adequate, as suggested by Hair et al. (2010). $\chi^2/df = 2.220 (<3)$, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.058 (<0.07), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.931 (>0.90), and comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.943 (>0.90). Convergent and discriminant validities were used to prove construct validity. All of the constructs have construct reliability (CR) and AVE values more than 0.5 and 0.7, respectively (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Nunnally, 1978). The findings of Cronbach alpha, factor loading for each item, and construct validity are shown in Table two.

Table 2. Results for convergent validity and construct reliability (CR)

Factors and items	Standardized factor loadings*	Cronbach's α	AVE	CR
Career commitment		0.725	0.597	0.922
CC1: If I could secure an alternative job outside the media profession while maintaining the same compensation, I would likely consider taking it.	0.736			
CC2: I am unequivocally determined to pursue a career in the media profession.	0.875			
CC3: If given the chance to start anew, I would opt not to choose a career in the media profession.	0.781			
CC4: Even with abundant financial resources, I would likely continue working in the media profession.	0.765			
CC5: I am so fond of this career	0.712			

that the thought of giving it up does not appeal to me.				
CC6: I consider this profession to be the ideal lifelong vocation.	0.769			
CC7R: Regrettably, I feel disillusioned about entering the media profession.	0.811			
CC8: A substantial portion of my personal time is devoted to work itself.	0.723			
Impression management		0.829	0.814	0.897
Self-promotion		0.898	0.704	0.905
SP1: Talk proudly about your experience or education.	0.881			
SP2: Make people aware of your talents or qualifications.	0.808			
SP3: Let others know that you are valuable to the organization.	0.794			
SP4: Make people aware of your accomplishments.	0.872			
Ingratiation		0.887	0.654	0.882
INGRT1: Compliment your colleagues so they will see you as likeable.	0.752			
INGRT2: Take an interest in your colleagues' personal lives to show them that you are friendly.	0.761			
INGRT3: Praise your colleagues for their accomplishments so they will consider you a nice person.	0.878			
INGRT4: Do personal favors for your colleagues to show them that you are friendly.	0.838			
Exemplification		0.873	0.613	0.863
EXEMP1: Stay at work late so people will know you are hard working.	0.855			
EXEMP2: Try to appear busy, even at times when things are slower.	0.708			
EXEMP3: Arrive at work early to look dedicated.	0.749			
EXEMP4: Come to the office at	0.812			

night or on weekends to show that you are dedicated.				
Intimidation		0.890	0.610	0.886
INTIM1: Be intimidating with co-workers when it will help you get your job done.	0.799			
INTIM2: Let others know that you can make things difficult for them if they push you too far.	0.767			
INTIM3: Deal forcefully with colleagues when they hamper your ability to get your job done	0.809			
INTIM4: Deal strongly or aggressively with co-workers who interfere in your business	0.813			
INTIM5: Use intimidation to get colleagues to behave appropriately.	0.714			
Supplication		0.895	0.617	0.889
SUPP1: Act like you know less than you do so people will help you out.	0.792			
SUPP2: Try to gain assistance or sympathy from people by appearing needy in some area.	0.732			
SUPP3: Pretend not to understand something to gain someone's help	0.843			
SUPP4: Act like you need assistance so people will help you out.	0.837			
SUPP5: Pretend to know less than you do so you can avoid an unpleasant assignment.	0.716			
Subjective career success		0.915	0.713	0.908
SCS1: How successful has your career been?	0.729			
SCS2: Compared to your co-workers, how successful is your career?	0.871			
SCS3: How successful do your 'significant others' feel your career has been?	0.877			
SCS4: Given your age, do your	0.891			

significant others' feel your career has been on schedule or ahead or behind schedule?				
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Testing of Hypotheses

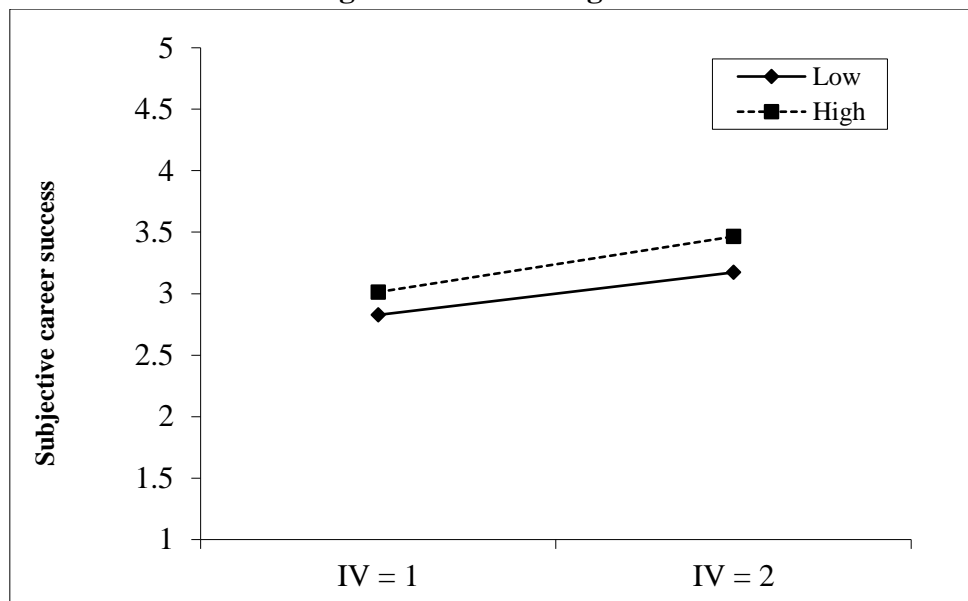
Direct and indirect paths were examined for testing the hypotheses. A significant relationship between CC and SCS were found ($\beta = 0.489$; $p\text{-value} < 0.01$) supporting H1. The moderating impact of interaction (CC*IM) in the relationship between CC and SCS are found to be significant ($\beta = 0.120$; $p\text{-value} < 0.01$) supporting H2. All the hypotheses proposed in our study have been established and shown in **Table 3**. The moderating effect of interaction is shown in **Figure 2**.

Table 3. Path analysis

Path	Direct effect	Remarks
CC->SCS	0.489**	H1 Supported
IM->SCS	0.138**	
Interaction->SCS	0.120*	H2 Supported

Notes: * $p\text{-value} < 0.05$; ** $p\text{-value} < 0.01$; CC= Career commitment; SCG= Subjective career success; IM= Impression management

Figure 2. Moderating effect



The visual representation of Jeremy Dawson graph showing the moderating effect of interaction (CC*IM) on SCS can be clearly identified in Figure 3. As the interaction effect increases, the relationships between CC and SCS get strengthened.

Discussion

The study shows the crucial role played by employees for generating subjective career success. The study contributes to understand the importance of impression management as an effective practice for strengthening the relationship between employee career commitment and subjective career success. The study adds knowledge in the extant literature by fulfilling research calls in the field of employee career

commitment and subjective career success (Kundi et al., 2020; Ng and Feldman, 2014; Katz et al., 2019). The study delineated the boundary conditions by taking impression management for strengthening thus considering the recommendations of Lu *et al.* (2018) to understand the role of moderating variables in social science research (Saks, 2019). Impression management plays a crucial role by controlling others perception about oneself that supports positive self-image and recognition in the workplace, which are crucial for propagating employee subjective career progress has been established in the study.

Implications of the study

The study has several theoretical contributions. The study helps understand how non-monetary ways like impression management can support employees' subjective career success and well-being by displaying employees had work and performance. It should be noted that managers should understand the value of employee commitment and provide support to them for fostering the same. The research also expands knowledge and understanding in the field of human resources management.

Limitations and future research

The study has the following limitations that can serve as a guide for future research. First, the study is based on cross-sectional research. So, achieving more reliable information requires longitudinal study. Second, the respondents of the study belong to service industry. So, other industry can be included in future studies for enhancing generalizability of the results. Third, the respondents of the study comprise white-collar employees and, therefore, it is suggested to carry further study on these variables by taking blue-collar or part-time employees. Fourth, for avoiding CMB, future researchers can apply other techniques as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003) including time lag method adopted in the study. Fifth, some individual moderating variables such as personality along with organizational moderating variable can be studied by future researchers.

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