

Subjective Career Success: A Literature Review and Prospect

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Abstract

Career success is a major field in the study of human resource management. Also career success is deeply concerned about employees and organizations, especially in organizations with no borders which provide many careers today. Employees can no longer be relied just on objective measures such as wages, job titles, authority and so on for indexes to measure career success. Subjective career success is more and more important for employees. This article attempts to make a summary on subjective career success definition using empirical research and putting forward the direction of future research.

Keywords

Career, Career Success, Subjective Career Success

1. Introduction

Career success has been a motivation for a long time. Scholars used work satisfaction to represent career success at first. Hughes divided career successes into objective career success and subjective career success [1], and especially stressed the importance of subjective career success. I think that research of the subjective career success is particularly important because career models have changed under the influence of postmodernism. Success has transitioned from a traditional career development model to a no boundaries career development model [2]. In the traditional career development model, the internal and external environment of an organization is relatively stable. These organizations provide staff with permanent and stable careers. Staff move along the organizational design in a linear path with gradual promotions, wages that are restricted to hours worked, and a fixed number of years. These are typical traits in the traditional career development model. On the other hand, in the no boundaries career development model, staff development opportunities are beyond a single organization; employees face more selections but, poor job stability [2]. Before measurements of success were related to ex-

ternal standards, such as job status and wage growth, no boundaries career development model starts to lose appeal. Eith T. K., Harald S., and Claudia S. have shown that more and more individuals are making decisions based on subjective criteria, rather than on salary or promotions to assess their own career success [3].

Subjective career success is more and more important for employees. This article attempts to make a summary on subjective career success definition using empirical research and putting forward the direction of future research.

2. Definition

2.1. Definition of Career Success

Jim Meade suggested that career success was the result of personal experience and could be seen as personal experience and the accumulation of real or perceived accomplishments [4], so that career success involves subjective career successes and objective career successes.

2.2. Definition of Subjective Career Success

Subjective career success can be understood in two ways. First, it's better to have an integral subjective assessment for career success, some factors may not be under the influence of objective factors; the second explanation for subjective career success is apart from objective factors that requires additional subjective assessments [5].

About the characteristic structure of subjective career success, Heslin suggested that subjective career success should include realization of goals, self-identity and perceived opportunities for promotion [6]. Arthur argued that subjective career success refers to his career understanding and evaluation [7]. Dries defined career success as a four-dimensions of the integrated framework, including external achievements, external feelings and internal achievements and inner feelings [8].

3. Measurement of the Subjective Career Success

Based on the analysis of existing studies, there are three ways for measure subjective career success.

3.1. Career Satisfaction

Greenhaus J. H., Parasuraman S., Worry W. M. used the job satisfaction scale to measure the subjective career success [9]. This scale has three dimensions: individual satisfaction for achievements, individual satisfaction for progression and individual satisfaction for income, development [10]. But career satisfaction only can represent one aspect of subjective career success, job satisfaction scale is a defective way for measuring subjective career success.

3.2. Overall Perception of Success

Turban, Dougherty designed subjective career success questionnaire for measured subjective career success [11]. This questionnaire measures subjective career success for overall subjective perception, including four items. But this way lacked information that subjective factors promote overall career success assessment and can't form comprehensive evaluation for subjective career success [5].

3.3. Multi-Dimensional Measuring Method

Gattiker and Larwood established a measurement for subjective career success that had five dimensions. The five dimensions are relationships, economic status, work, grade status and life success [12]; but this measurement was designed over 20 years, Abele and Wiese suggested that work and employees have changed a lot during the time [13]. Shockley, K. M. suggested this way in the contemporary explanation is insufficient [5].

Parke, P. & Arthur established a measurement for subjective career success of three dimensions [14]. Respectively three dimensions are "know how" "know why" "know who is". Shockley, K. M. *et al.* suggested this measurement did not have enough samples, so explained forces also insufficient [5]; Shockley, K. M. designed subjective career success questionnaire (SCSI) [5], this questionnaire has 24 items, from eight dimensions to

measure subjective career success, respectively are authenticity, growth and development, influence, meaning of career, personal life, the quality of work, recognition, career satisfaction sense. But this questionnaire was based on the background of western culture. Whether it is suitable for China's situation needs to be considered.

4. Empirical Study on the Subjective Career Success

4.1. Antecedent Variables

There are many studies on the subjective career success antecedent variables, based on the analysis of existing literatures, individual differences, family and organization, this three factors of subjective career success are summarized.

4.1.1. Individual Differences

The first individual difference is ability. Fang Wang indicated that personal knowledge and skills have a significant effect on subjective career success. Possibly due to these employees' previous use of the skills learned on the job, they are able to experience more pleasures of success [15]. Wenxia, Zhou confirmed career competence plays a significant role on subjective career success. She pointed out that human capital, social capital and psychological capital of employees were three abilities which were qualifications for jobs [16]. Firstly, employees' personal human capital enhancement enriches and increases the knowledge and skills of the entire company. Secondly, employees have a wealth of social capital which contributes to enriching the company's social network, thus helping the company acquire a wide variety of resources. Overall the corporate culture consists of the intangible assets, some parts consisting of the psychological capital of employees, also Andrea suggested an important factor concerning the individual is psychological factors, he confirmed career self-effectiveness played a positive role on subjective career success through empirical research [13].

Another individual difference is the employees' personal strategy to success. Bickle suggested political skills as belonging to one of personal strategies. He found political skills played a positive role on subjective career success. Political skills main include politically sensitivity, interpersonal influence, organizational coordination, and so on [17].

4.1.2. Family

The effects of family factors on the subjective career success also are an important area of interest. Most studies are focused on the employee's multiple role stresses including work-life conflict processing as well as the differences between men and women. These factors have caught the attention of the scholars. Weijing, Zhang studied the work family relationship and how it affects subjective career success [18]. The work family relationship including work to promote family and family to promote work, the results showed that both has a positive effect on subjective career success. Reasons may be that the promotion of work to family leads to enhancing of team cohesion and self-efficacy of their own work, and the output are essential condition of career development. They may provide the basis for subjective career success. The promotion of family to work may be because of the individual in the family wishes to obtain good emotional resources which can help them improve work performance, thus staff would have more incentive to participate in the work. This performance will eventually bring personal career goals or promotion, etc. The family will effectively promote work which is helpful to the realization of career success.

4.1.3. Organization

The first one is organization's sponsorship. Some studies suggested that organization's sponsorship has a positive effect on subjective career success. Organizations sponsoring includes career guidance, mentoring, parent relations, career support, skill development opportunities generally.

The second one is network behavior. Forret and Dougherty suggested that network includes five parts, they are Social, maintain internal contact, be engaged in the professional network, strengthen internal awareness and participation in community activities. And social networking is becoming more and more important to career self-management, so their network is very important in explaining career success [11]. Van Emmerik, *et al.* found that the informal network has a positive effect on subjective career success [19]; Roziyah through empirical research show that a social network has a positive effect on subjective career successes [20].

4.2. Outcome Variables

Organizational productivity, organizational emotion and employees' feelings have been proven as outcome variables of subjective career success. Pachulicz's studies have shown that subjective career success has positive effects on organizational productivity, the perceived of career success not only improve employee job performance, but also employee performance development which is beneficial to the organization [21].

Schmitt and Kuljanin's studies have shown that subjective career success enhances organizational emotion, such as organizational commitment [20]; Armstrong-Stassen's study showed that subjective career success could enhance the willingness of older workers to remain in the organization [22].

Adele and Spurk have shown that subjective career success affect employee feelings, such as satisfaction of life and happiness [23]. When an individual experiences subjective career success, there will be a self-fulfilling peak which is experienced, under the positive and happy state of mind, employees will generate life satisfaction and subjective well-being.

4.3. Mechanisms of Subjective Career Success

4.3.1. Mediator Research

There are not many mediator researches of subjective career successes. Nabi confirmed the network behavior played a mediator role between the subjective career success and occupational expectations [24]. Wenxia Zhou demonstrated the organizational support played a mediator role between psychological capital and subjective career success [16].

4.3.2. Moderator Research

Ming Feng and Cong Li confirmed that the political skills played moderated role between impression management and subjective career success [25]. Some employees use the impression management strategy to leave good impressions on their superiors. If personal political skill level is high, they are more likely to win the attention of the superiors and this is conducive to their own subjective perception of career success. There are not many moderator researches of subjective career successes. It needs further research.

5. Prospect

First, in measurement of subjective career success, future research should be based on the background of Chinese enterprises, and establish the scale for China's situation with representative samples.

Second, in definition of subjective career success, the future research should be further clarified the definition of subjective career success, and distinguished with other concepts.

Third, in the mechanism of subjective career success, Chinese scholars should start more empirical research about purely subjective career successes, and use different research methods to explore the antecedent variables, outcome variables of the subjective career success, as well as mediator and mediator variables.

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