

Work Life Balance as a Mediator between Employability and Subjective Career Success

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This study examined the association between employability, work life balance; and subjective career success; and ii) the mediating role of work life balance. The population comprised of IT sector organizations registered with The Pakistan Software House Association (P@SHA). A survey (N=495) based on a multistage sampling was employed. Employability enables an individual to create, identify and realize career opportunities. The instrument used in this study was adapted (DiRenzo, 2010; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007). Correlation and mediation analysis were conducted. Results indicated i) relationship among key variables; and ii) a partial mediating role of WLB was also supported. The cross section design limits the understanding so a cohort longitudinal study may be undertaken in the future. Focusing on one industry may have led to less variability in sample. Recommendation is to provide facilities and developmental opportunities to employees. In future inclusion of other factors like organizational climate was suggested
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Amidst growing popularity of downsizing and outsourcing practices by organizations, it has become less realistic to expect a job for life (Yates, 2013). In addition the employer organizations are only playing a supportive role in the career management of its employees. Now the individuals are taking ownership of their own careers (Akkermans & Tims, 2017). Consequently, employability has replaced the concept of employment security in career theories (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; Hallier, 2009; Inkson & King, 2011). Researchers indicate that now individuals must possess multifaceted core and auxiliary competencies (Yates, 2013). Employability is an aggregate of such competencies (Donald, Baruch, & Ashleigh, 2019)

Researchers propose that employability personifies the capacity of an individual to move self sufficiently in labor market and achieve sustainability in ones career (Sok, Blomme, & Tromp, 2013). Defining employability is complicated by the coexistence of different viewpoints of what it means to be employable (Thijssen, Van der Heijden, & Rocco, 2008). A review of literature indicates the following notions of employability; i) societal employability (Bowers-Brown & Harvey, 2004; Hillage & Pollard, 1998), ii) organizational employability (Forrier & Sels, 2003), iii) and individual employability (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004; Rothwell, Jewell, & Hardie, 2009). Individual employability may be defined, as the ability to keep the job one has or to get the job one desires (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). The objective and scope of the proposed study deems it appropriate that employability be approached from an individual-level.

To structure our enquiry the seminal conceptual model of employability is used in this study. Fugate et al. (2004) defined employability as “a form of work specific (pro) active adaptability” that comprises three dimensions (p. 32). These are (i) human and social capital (ii) career identity; and (iii) adaptability (Fugate et al., 2004). However after the review of the literature and objectives of the study the subscales for the same are adapted from (McArdle et al., 2007). The theoretical model of this study draws heavily on the aforementioned study.

In this study employability is measured through following dimensions. The notion of human capital runs parallel to Arthur et al. (2005) ‘knowing how’ career meta-competency. Researchers exemplify the personal factors like “age, education, training, skills; work experience and knowledge” (p.24, p.249) to indicate an individual’s human capital

(McArdle et al., 2007).

Social capital is defined as resources grounded and flourished by means of individuals social networks. These resources can be accessed or marshaled through links in the networks (Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001). Social capital is associated to the magnitude and quality of networks an individual is able to craft, accrue and marshal (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005).

Career identity denotes the way an individual defines one's self with reference to one's job context. It is measured using two proxy measure as follows; i) Identity awareness may be defined as enduring, articulate but dynamic reflexive biographical narratives that are influenced by the broader social and cultural context (Giddens, 1991). ii) Career self-efficacy is an individuals assessment regarding his or her capability to successfully managing his or her career (Kossek, Roberts, Fisher, & Demarr, 1998).

Adaptability is defined as the meta-competence for career. Furthermore it has been stated that individuals with high adaptability will tend to actively engage in goal setting, optimizing psychological resources; and exerting efforts (Hall & Moss, 1999). It is measured using two proxy measured as follows; i) Boundary less mindset is defined as the attitude that people hold towards fostering and pursuing work-related relationships across organizational boundaries (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). ii) Proactive personality has been defined as a dispositional tendency to take personal initiative across a range of activities and situations (Crant & Bateman, 2000). Researchers maintain that people who are highly proactive identify opportunities and act on them, show initiative and persevere until they bring about meaningful change (Robbins, DeCenzo, & Coulter, 2008). Therefore, employability may be defined as the development of personal resources and action orientation that results in securing and maintenance of employment.

The fundamental aim of an individual's work life is achievement of subjective career success (Abele, Spurk, & Volmer, 2011). Career success is a consequence of an individual's experiences. It is defined as the accumulated positive work and psychological outcomes resulting from one's work experiences (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005).. Individuals regard subjective career success in comparison to self-stipulated criteria (Colakoglu, 2011) in order to appraise ones career self-satisfaction and achievement (Ng et al., 2005; Peluchette, 1993). Generally the principal construct used most frequently to measure subjective career success is career satisfaction (Lounsbury, Steel, Gibson,

& Drost, 2008). A review of literature reveals two main pointers of subjective career success These are i) employability (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003) and ii) work–home interaction (Kinnunen, Rantanen, Mauno, & Peeters, 2014). The research on antecedents of career success is lean as compared to research on its consequences (Ballout, 2009). The present study contributed to the literature on the subject by examining antecedents of subjective career success

. Employability relates to work life balance. As emphasized by **Direnzo, Greenhaus, and Weer (2015)** employability is a tool that empowers an individual to take a driving seat of his career as well as achieving a balance between work and personal life (Direnzo et al., 2015). Furthermore it is acknowledged that employee satisfaction is highly dependent on the balance between work and life (Pookaiyaudom, 2015; Susi & Jawaharrani, 2010). Döckel (2003) is of the opinion that organizations should adopt telecommuting, centers for childcare besides employee assistance and referrals programs as instruments for accommodating employees. It is engagement in such efforts that may yield an image of a concerned employee. That will stimulate positive attitudes from employees towards the employer (Döckel, Basson, & Coetzee, 2006). Such organizational strategies not only facilitate in maintaining the balance between work and life and may be instrumental in; i). reducing family conflicts of employees, ii). retaining the competent employees, iii). increasing job satisfaction; and iv). reducing stress at workplace (RANDMANN, 2009). Recognizing the significance of an individual's non-work realm experiences and its influence on career outcomes, work life balance is considered a key variable to explain the subjective career success in this study.

The theoretical underpinnings employed herein are grounded in conservation of resources (COR), human resource theory (Becker, 1964) and contemporary career theory. The conservation of resources (COR) perspective postulates that resources comprise of certain objects, drives or characteristics that are valued by people (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Such attributes and dispositions are in fact resources that lead to achievement of personal goals (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014). They can be in the form of contextual elements or individual disposition; and may be rather stable or dynamic (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). In accordance with the work- home resources model such resources greatly enable an individual to experience desirable outcomes both at home and workplace (Ten

Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

Moreover, the spillover model proposes that a positive or negative impact can be evoked by work micro-system on family micro-system or vice versa. This approach posits that there is a correspondence between what occurs in the work and family environments, for example contentment in one area of life may influence satisfaction in other life domains like family and other social institutions. To sum up individuals experience spill-over of emotions between the work and non-work systems (Clark, 2000; Hill, Ferris, & Märtinson, 2003).

The human capital theory asserts that additional education or training increase individual's knowledge and skill level so that eventually individual's productivity and lifelong income progresses (Becker, 1964).

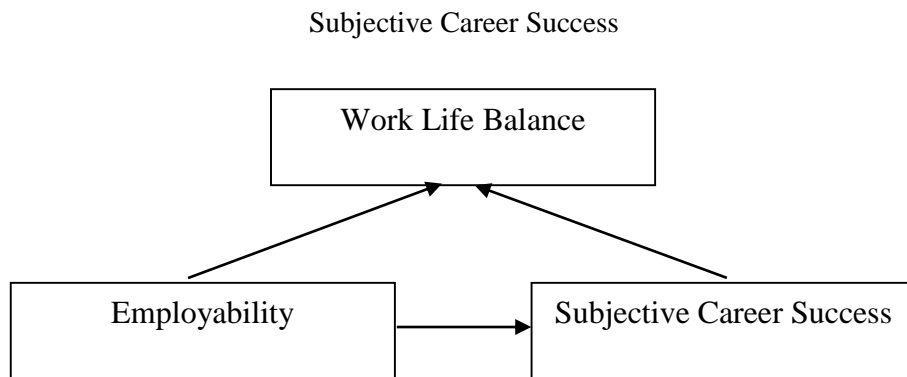
Researchers interested in careers and employability report that the economic environment is progressively becoming turbulent in which contemporary careers are pursued (Direenzo & Greenhaus, 2011) thus pointing to the evolution of a new career ecosystem (Baruch, Altman, & Tung, 2016). Hence implicating movement in a career ecosystem and highlighting the significance of employability in career context.

Rationale of the study

Notable work in the area of career management and theory has shown a great interest in the area of employability. It calls for a need for theoretical development and consolidation of the employability construct (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017) On the economic horizon there are blatant market pressures, tendency for leaner structures and continuous vagaries that directed organizations to become flexible thereby implicating present day career development of an individual (De Vos, De Hauw, & Van der Heijden, 2011). This numerical and functional flexibility can only be possible by hiring 'employable' workers (Fugate et al., 2004; Van Dam, 2004). Increasing individual's employability has become center of attention for employees and organization alike (Thijssen et al., 2008)

This study will contribute theoretically as a review of extant literature revealed a potential to examine antecedents of career success (Ballout, 2009). Additionally literature signaled a need to focus attention on professions and context where empirical evidence regarding career success is modest. The IT domain is characterized by dynamic work environment, boundary less, contingent and contractual workforce (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017) hence adding to a potential to this study.

This study aimed to develop an insight into IT professionals' perception regarding employability, work life balance and their subjective career success. At an individual level this study may i) create an awareness regarding taking a driving seat for maintaining ones employability especially in the context IT industry ii) acknowledging significance of attaining a balance between work and life. At an organizational level this study aimed to suggest measures particularly human resource practices that may foster the fit between companies' human resource practices and challenges faced by IT professional. Fig 1. *Theoretical Framework*



Objectives

The leading objectives of the current study were to explore the relationship between employability, work life balance and subjective career success. Further, it was also intended to determine the mediating role of work life balance in predicting subjective career success from employability among IT professionals from Pakistan.

Hypotheses

1. Employability relates to subjective career success
2. Employability relates to work life balance
3. Work life balance relates to subjective career success
4. Work life balance plays a mediating role in the relationship between employability and subjective career success

Method

Research Design

A descriptive and relational was adopted as suggested by the purpose of the study. This study was aimed at examining the relationship

between, employability, work life balance and subjective career success. The nature of study was cross section.

Sample

In this quantitative research study, data was obtained from 495 IT professionals working in IT industry. In this study, multi-stage sampling technique was used. A complete list of IT companies registered with P@SHA i.e. The Pakistan Software House Association was obtained. Following a multistage sampling 40 organizations was selected and out of these a convenience-based sampling of individuals was done.

The survey ultimately yielded 495 usable questionnaires. The maximum age of the respondents was 47 while minimum is 22. Out of a total of 495 respondents 306 were single while 189 were married. The average tenure with the current organization was 2.7 years. The minimum tenure reported was 1 year while maximum was 8 years. As regards career level 73 reported entry level, 233 mid, 178 senior and 11 others. 261 were permanent, 232 contractual and 2 indicate other nature of employment. As human capital represented by education was an important element of this study thus, the only inclusion criterion was respondents having at least completed post secondary and intermediate level of education.

Measures

Employability Scale. Comprised of an inventory of scales measuring this multi dimensional construct. McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall (2007) designed this measure by adapting indicators from distinct sources outlined below

Human Capital. This is originally designed by Eby et al. (2003). The human capital was measured using three items .The reliability score for this dimension was .82.

Social Capital. This is originally designed by Eby et al. (2003). Social capital was measured using five items. The reliability of this dimension was .77.

Career Identity. The second dimension career identity was adopted from McArdle et al. (2007). Two proxy measures were used to measure it i.e. identity awareness and career self-efficacy. Identity awareness scale originally developed by Stumpf, Colarelli, and Hartman, (1983) and comprises of six items. Career self-efficacy scale developed by Kossek, Roberts, and Demarr, (1998). Four items are used to measure it. The reliability score of career identity was .75.

Adaptability. The fourth dimension adaptability was measured

by using proxy measures of proactive personality and boundary less mindset. Three items from Briscoe, Hall, & DeMuth, (2006) boundary less mindset scale were adopted. Out of ten items Bateman and Crant, (1993) Proactive personality scale three items were used in this study. The reliability score for this dimension was .66.

The overall reliability score for employability was .87

Work Life Balance Scale. This scale was principally designed by Greenhaus, Allen and Foley (2004). This work life balance measure was adopted from Direnzo, Greenhaus, and Weer (2015). Six items are used to measure this variable and included item such as “I am able to balance the demands of my work and the demands of my family life”. The reliability was .79.

Subjective Career Success Scale. This scale is originally drafted by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Foley, (1990). Five items were adapted from Direnzo (2010). It comprised five items like” I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career and “I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals advancement “. The reliability was .89.

All items were assessed using a 5-point likert scale from (1) ‘strongly disagree’ to (5) ‘strongly agree’. In all scales, a higher score indicated a higher presence of the construct. Demographics were also sought from the respondents.

Table 1 below shows Cronbach’s alpha reliabilities of employability, subjective career success and work life balance

Table 1

Cronbach’s Alpha Reliabilities of Employability, Subjective Career Success and Work Life Balance (N=495)

Variable	Number of items	Alpha Reliability
Employability	24	.87
Work Life Balance	6	.79
Subjective Career Success	5	.89

Procedure

Forty organizations from IT industry were selected based on a multi stage stratified sampling. For the purpose of data collection, a survey questionnaire was used. A formal letter requesting permission to conduct survey was used to ensure adherence to research ethics and protocol. This study complied with ethical considerations and followed ethical research norms. The permission of respondents and anonymity is ensured. The questionnaire specified that the data obtained would only be

used for academic purposes. Permission of authors was obtained for use of their questionnaires

Results

Pearson product moment correlation was conducted to determine the relationship among employability, subjective career success and work life balance. Andrew Hayes SPSS PROCESS plugin was performed to determine the mediating role of work life balance in predicting subjective career success.

Table 2

Relationship Between Employability, Work Life Balance and Subjective Career Success in IT professionals of Lahore (N = 495)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Employability	4.15	.905	-	-	-
2. Subjective Career Success	3.92	.899	.646**	-	-
3. Work Life Balance	4.48	.905	.596**	.746**	-

Notes. **p < .01.

Table 2 revealed a positive correlation between employability and subjective career success. Moreover, employability had a significant positive relationship with work life balance. The mediating variable work life balance had a significant strong positive relationship with subjective career success.

Table 3

Mediation Analysis through Andrew Hayes SPSS PROCESS plugin Indicating Relationship Between Employability, Work Life Balance and Subjective Career Success in IT professionals of Lahore (N = 495)

Steps of mediation	Unstandardized Coefficients (b)	Std. Error	F	R ²	Decision
Model 1 Outcome: SCS Predictor: E	1.129	.0602	352.6183	.417	.0000 < .05
Model 2 Outcome: WLB Predictor: E	1.0620	.0644	271.7063	.3553	.0000 < .05
Model 3 Outcome: SCS Mediator: WLB Predictor: E	.5496	.340		.6188	.0000 < .05
	.5463	.0607			.0000 < .05
Indirect effect	.5836				

Notes. p < .05. E Employability, WLB=Work Life Balance and SCS= Subjective Career Success

Table 4
Indirect effect of X on Y

	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Boot SE</i>	<i>Boot LCCI</i>	<i>Boot ULCI</i>
WLB	.5836	.431	.5056	.6741

In Model 1 it was established that the employability was related to the subjective career success. It implied that employability explained 41 percent of the variance in subjective career success. The unstandardized coefficient $b= 1.129$ and the $R^2= .4170$ associated with the employability on subjective career success was significant ($p < .05$). Thus the path c was significant and the condition of mediation in step 1 was met.

To determine that employability was associated with work life balance (the hypothesized mediator), regression analysis was performed on employability and work life balance (step 2) According to Model 2 the unstandardized coefficient $b=1.0620$ and the $R^2= .3553$ associated with the employability on work life balance was significant ($p < .05$). Wherein employability explained 35 percent of variation in work life balance. Hence the condition of step 2 was met, stipulating significant path a .

The model 3 identified the total effect where the employability and work life balance predicts subjective career success. The $R^2= .6188$. Here almost 61 percent of variation was explained. The model was significant ($p < .05$). The reduction in the values of the unstandardized coefficients i.e. employability is decreased from 1.1299 to .5463. This indicated that work life balance partially mediates the relationship between employability and subjective career success.

Table 4 showed the mediation analysis was conducted using bootstrapping method with bias corrected confidence estimates. 95 % confidence interval of the indirect effects was obtained with 1000 bootstrap samples. According to Preacher and Hayes (2013), point estimates of indirect estimates are considered significant only when confidence intervals do not contain a zero. Table 4 depicted confidence intervals (upper limit and lower limits) does not contain zero. So the partial mediation was significant.

Discussion

The aim of the current paper was to test a model of employability to a sample of IT sector professionals. In particular, this paper investigated the relationship between employability and (i) subjective career success; and ii) work life balance. It also aimed to gauge the relationship between work life balance and subjective career success. Another objective was to

determine the mediating role if any, of work life balance between employability and subjective career success. Largely, the results of this study supported employability model and establishes the applicability of the proposed model in the context of this study.

The result of correlation depicted the following; i) employability had a positive relationship with subjective career success. ii) employability had a significant positive relationship with work life balance; and iii) work life balance had significant strong positive relationship with subjective career success. In total, 41% of the variance in subjective career success and 35% of the variance in work life balance was explained by employability, positing support for Hypotheses 1 and 2. Work life balance had significant strong positive relationship with subjective career success supporting Hypothesis 3. Whereas, the results of mediation analysis reveal that work life balance only partially mediates the relationship between employability and subjective career success. Thus, partially supporting Hypothesis 4.

The results of this study supported that employability relates to subjective career success. This was consistent with the findings of Rahman, Naqvi, and Ramay (2008) who succinctly pointed the unique case of IT professionals stating that despite a good pay, this group of professionals seek to acquire opportunities for further training and development. As they realize that in order to remain employable they have to keep abreast with dynamic skills demanded in the market. Therefore they prefer organizations that provide for personal and professional growth (Rahman et al., 2008). These competencies enable individuals embrace their career potential (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; Fugate et al., 2004; Heijde & Van Der Heijden, 2006; Small, Shacklock, & Marchant, 2018; Smith, 2010). Furthermore, the result of current study indicated that employability explained 41 percent of the variance in subjective career success. Examination of concerned literature tends to suggest that employability is regarded as a fundamental promoter of career success in today's unpredictable environment (Bagshaw, 1997; Fugate et al., 2004).

The second hypothesis concerns assessing the relationship between employability and work life balance. The result indicated that employability explained 35 percent of variation in work life balance. Researchers have maintained that being employable is not an only end in itself and an individual's expectations pertaining to employment extend beyond financial benefits (Rousseau, Ho, & Greenberg, 2006). Employability reflects the role of an individual agency (Nauta, Vianen,

Heijden, Dam, & Willemsen, 2009). When a person independently sets and exerts effort toward a challenging, personally meaningful goal and then goes on to succeed in attaining that goal, a sense of psychological success would likely be achieved (Lewin, 1958; Locke, 1991). In a similar fashion, Direnzo, Greenhaus, and Weer (2015) emphasize that employability is instrumental in empowering an individual by affording control and choice for employment options that help them to adjust and balance varying demands at work and personal life.

The third hypothesis dealt with the relationship between work life balance and subjective career success. The results of present study indicated a significant positive relationship between them. This result aligned with a study by Greenhaus and Kossek (2014) who asserted that work life balance influences career outcomes.

This study also concluded that work life balance plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between employability and subjective career success. Thus partially supporting hypothesis 4. Researchers like Carlson, Grzywacz, and Zivnuska, (2009) have argued that work life balance relates to the significant outcomes both at work and home. This might be consistent with a study that have found that the support from facilitating partners results in lessening work and family loads, motivating them in dealing with difficulties at work, and developing positive feelings regarding self that would influence attitudinal and behavioral reactions in work and family domains (Aryee & Luk, 1996; Clarke & O'Brien, 2004).

Conclusion

This study aspired to join the rank of lean yet notable research work that had empirically tested the relationship among employability, work life balance and subjective career success in the context of IT industry. This research provided broad support for the model, and established the presence of relationship between employability, work life balance and subjective career success. It also demonstrated that work life balance played a significant positive role in the attainment of subjective career success. However work life balance only partially mediates the relationship between employability and subjective career success. The findings of this study offer both theoretical and practical apparatuses to help understand and guides individuals in career planning and management. Researchers hope that the relationship proposed in this study will encourage further research in this area.

Limitations and Suggestions

The present study had certain potential weaknesses. First, the cross section design of this study restricted understanding and documentation of career advancement, therefore it is suggested that a cohort longitudinal study may be conducted in the future. Second, data collection was done from the IT industry and to generalize the results it would be more appropriate to enhance the variability of sample. Extending the work on other samples such as physicians; and academics would help in validating the present findings. Finally in future researchers should consider other variables like organization climate as potential intervening variables between employability and subjective career success..

Implications

In our local context both academically and practically this study had a potential to contribute. The empirical testing and positing employability as antecedent of subjective career success were theoretical contributions of this study. The findings of this study brought to fore the importance of fostering employability in face of heightening competition and competencies demanded by employers. At an organizational level it provides an insight for managers in IT sector to devise policies that not only provide for development of employees but also facilitate them by incorporating flexibility and support for achieving greater work life balance and ultimately experience subjective career success. Provisioning of career counseling and developmental opportunities should be a part of human resource strategy in organizations..

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