

Career Success in Pakistan: Human Capital and Social Networking

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Abstract: Career success has become crucial for individuals in today's competitive environment. Academic scholarship has highlighted different indicators and determinants which contribute to career success. Traditionally the concept of career was based on rigid and hierarchical structure but today its meaning and nature has been changed. The goal of our paper is to study this phenomenon in Pakistan and explore the influence of human capital and social networking on career success in the changing environment of contemporary Pakistan. The research is conducted in Public sector organizations of Pakistan and data was collected from 152 employees through self-administered questionnaire. Findings have revealed two main conclusions; first, human capital and social networking have been significantly influencing career growth of employees in the public sector organizations and second, social networking has stronger impact on career success in public sector firms as compare to human capital. Research Implications and future directions are also given in this paper.

Key words: Career • Career success • Social networking • Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

During the last decades, attention towards career and career success has grown at tremendous pace and a reasonable amount of literature has been developed. This literature defines career growth as a subjective as well as an objective phenomenon; and highlights that there is no one road to career success. However, in Pakistan limited research has been conducted in this field and especially individuals' career success factors have over looked in public sector organization. This is because the public sector in Pakistan is considered in-efficient with less transparency, huge numbers of employees, lacking basic professional skills, low salaries and with unfair employment and promotion opportunities [1]. Despite these problems, public sector is still playing a major role in socio-economic growth of Pakistan. So it is important to explore this prodigy in this sector as it will contribute in two ways: first, research knowledge focusing on the gap between research and practices will be developed and; second, it will address to continuous appeal in the comparative human resource management to explore the less researched areas like Pakistan.

Career is a job related position that a person achieves through life and move in a defined order [2]. Career is

acquired through set of skills and knowledge which she/he has gained during her/his life time whereas career success is a psychological phenomenon that occurs as an outcome of work related achievements. Research scholarship reveals significant effect of human capital and social networking on career success. In line, this paper is going to see the impact of human capital and social networking as key determinants of employee's career success. The key concern of this paper is to see which phenomenon (human capital or social networking) has more influence on individual's career success in public sector organizations in Pakistan.

This study will be significantly important in order to provide valuable theoretical and practical contributions in the domain of individual's career success. From theoretical perspective this research focuses on the contextual factors such as human capital and social networking that affect individual's career success in Pakistan. While from practical point of view this first hand reality of developing country will be helpful for developing models (frame works) for the organizations. This study will also be helpful in an era where organizations are interested to expand their businesses across the domestic borders, so these companies must get knowledge about contextual factors associated with the

career of individuals. To investigate the impact of human capital and social networking on individual's career success, quantitative research methodology was employed.

In this paper, we will start with the review of relevant literature, develop our theoretical and research framework and then explain our research and analysis methods. In the subsequent paragraphs, research results and discussion will be presented. The last section will comprise of conclusion, research limitation, research implication and future research directions.

Literature Review

Career: The concept of career has a great value and interest for both individual and management of company. It is management's responsibility to manage their employees. On the other hand subordinate's main concern is to direct his/her career also. Most of the people do not consider important issues related to well organized careers choices like how to handle clash between job and individual personal life and how to approach career goal [3].

The understanding of career is a rich, vigorous and active field of research. The researchers face two main problems in the area of career definition: first, diversity of definitions; and second, these definitions are disjointed and fragmented. Therefore, researchers in this field confronted with many competing explanations and definitions.

Career derived from the Latin word *Carraria*, means a carriage-road or road. It is a person's course or progress through his or her life. Career is a series of job-related positions that a person gets during his life time [2]. From sociological perspective, career is defined as series of interrelated jobs, set in a hierarchy of prestige, through which an individual moves in a defined order. [4] Career, in the domain of psychology is defined as the sequence of individual's occupational related actions and behavior resulting into attitude and values which influences individual's span of life [5-6]. Consistently, career can also be seen as a "vehicle" that gives an individual a clear conception about self or self-realization in the world [6]. The traditional definition of career is that it is a series of person's work related skills and knowledge over the time. So this definition is more consistent with time rather than any fix arrangement of work [7].

Career Success: A large number of researchers have discussed career success in organizational management practices since 1980s. Career success is the psychological

work related achievement and outcomes one has accumulated as a result of one's knowledge and experiences [8-10]. Most of the research has focused on mostly two perspectives of career success i.e. objective/extrinsic and subjective/intrinsic career success [9].

Previous research had defined objective or extrinsic career success as a hierarchical advancement and progress [11]. This is visible, apparent and observable by an unbiased third party e.g. salary growth, occupational status, the degree of responsibility and promotion etc [12]. Opposite to this, intrinsic or subjective career success is deeply rooted in individual's advancement of career success with reference to subjective or individual's own pattern. Intrinsic career success was observed in terms of career satisfaction (extent to which an individual experiences satisfaction in his/her occupational life). Consistently, career success is described as individual's feeling of achievement, accomplishment and satisfaction [8]. According to Heflin [13], there is also considerable theoretical and empirical reason to accept that individuals compare their career success usually with reference point. Comparisons can be made with personal standards and values (self-referent) or with the others' achievements and success (other referent).

Theories and Approaches Related to Career Success:

The most significant conceptualization in literature is that, today's career realities are "boundary less" [14]. According to them "boundary less career" is a set of jobs that moves individual beyond the set of a single employment setting. According to "protean career" approach individual is responsible for his career advancement rather than the organization [15].

Another career approach associated with the growth of professional expertise was explained by research [16]. They gave a detailed multi-stage model that shows individual's development and progress in career-- carried out through different stages from novice to expert. Markowitsch *et al.* [17] explained the model in relation of individuals toward the area of professional application, work processes and work tasks.

Whatever position towards the objectivity of careers one takes, following [18] onion-skin model, professional success is always relational referring to person-related aspects of a career. According to them there are different layers of external factors which influence one's career like context of origin, work, society, culture and global context.

The nature and concept of careers has been changing significantly. Understanding the best career management practices in the age where organizations are boundary less, career is becoming more transactional and flexible. Consistently, the upcoming model of career encompasses diversity in options and directs more possible guidelines of career advancement [19].

Context and Career: As career is the progression of employment such as rank, position and role that an individual encounter [20]. All these accomplishments and success that a person achieves through life occurs in a specific context (e.g. economic, political and technical contextual arrangement). In contemporary organizational management theory, the leading and foremost paradigms have focused on context that re-shapes organizational outcomes [21]. To understand the relevance of context to career, it's important to highlight here that career is different from professional training and more related to its actualization in the real environment. Different approaches have been used by many researchers to shed light on this perennial dilemma. A complete version of social cognitive career theory [22] also depicts the connection between contextual factors and satisfied career. So it would be very unrealistic to say that, construct of a context is separate from career [21]. As success is strongly related with a specific context where it was developed, therefore the debate of career achievement in a structural context is interconnected. Determinants of career success vary from culture to culture. So this paper is trying to highlight this emerging concern in developing economy specifically in Pakistan. Now we would like to have a look on the relevant literature on human capital and networking.

Human Capital: As compared to tangible assets and financial capital, human capital is considered to be unique due to the ability of individuals that they possess in the form of knowledge [23]. According to human capital theory was emerged in west during 19th century [24]. It emphasized on enhancement of human capabilities and skills as a main element of economic development. As humans are considered to be an asset for an organization, so investment in this asset may lead to significant amount of profit. He further states that many researchers are of the view that it is essential to enhance person's education, skills along with many other capabilities for achieving economic and career growth in 21st century [24]. Becker [25] and other researcher defines human capital as employee's educational, professional, personal

experiences and continuous work history which is related with career and is considered as determinant of career success [8, 26].

Most of the researchers made evidences from the literature that return of education in the form of good pay and advancement in career are highly valuable and significant [27]. Many firms have rewarded law, business and engineering education as compared to the others types of education [28, 29]. Along with education, personal experience is another predictor of career success e.g. international assignments which directs individual's career toward success [11]. According to tournament theory and contest mobility model of career advancement, the person who will put maximum efforts and will put more struggles will win the tournament. Consistently, individual must concentrate on one's own self-improvement for attaining success [30]. Total time and tenure of work in individual career have significant relationship with career success [12, 27]. Individual who have more professional experiences will have more salary and have good career [31]. Continuous working history also significantly related with career advancement [32].

Research have supported that motivation also has significant relationship with career success [12,27,32-35]. Motivational variables play a very powerful role as a predictor of career achievements [32]. Another research study also highlights the positive link between higher rank and career success [36, 37]. It is debatable that higher rank through which employees have better understanding of the firm's work characteristics, working style, improvement in expertise and gaining specific experiences, these all enhance career and create opening for development [12]. So on the basis of above literature we can develop a hypothesis that:

Hypothesis 1: Human capital is significantly and positively related to career success.

Social Networking: Relationship or ties as the basic data comes under the heading of social network [38]. According to them the pattern of tie that creates links among set of individuals or social players is network. Every person in this social network has strong links or ties with other persons. Today's social networking is mainly used to shed light on locally and technologically connected individuals. Here, the size and nature of work play very important role [39]. Some groups are homogenous and smaller in size like small communities and colleagues; and some are heterogeneous and larger

in size like global and international groups [40]. Members of the same social group or clique are most likely to interconnect with each other as compared to the outer group where the structural holes are created [41].

Different theories define and conceptualize this concept e.g. weak tie theory [42] and structural hole theory have focused on structure of network while social resource theory [43, 44] paying attention on content of network. According to Burt [45, 46] strong and rich networking provide individuals three different benefits like unique and timely access to information, hold over resources and more visibility of career advancement in social structures. It shapes directly career by providing different sponsorship and mentoring, channels of information flow and enhances the chances of promotion.

Networking and career success have very strong interconnection. Strong networking and relationship building have significant relationship with career advancement. To maintain and cultivate extensive networks of professional as well as personal contacts is required for the foundation of securing new job opportunity [47]. A very strong political and familial networking underpins in the selection, promotion and transferring system of organization [48].

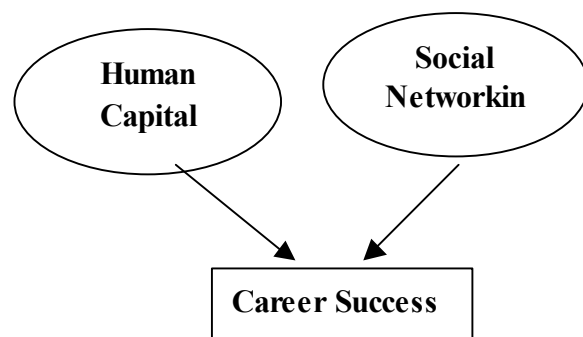
According to Khilji [49] social networking like relationship with the higher authority and immediate manager is an essential tool for getting attractive compensation, job and advancement in career in Pakistan. "If there are two people who are at the same level, but one of them have good relationships with the higher authority then he will be promoted and compensated more as compared to the other one". Saher [50, 51] has highlighted a strong role of employees' networking on selection and compensation (i.e., job promotion) in a local medical firm in Pakistan. Her research reveals that the connections with the people at the higher and influencing position open doors of success for individuals; therefore employees invest reasonable amount of time and energies to become the part of an employee network (based on familial, regional or ethnic identities) and are more loyal to their networks than to organization. According to Lyon [52] mostly the culture of developing countries has built upon professional relational and familial model. So these notions create dependency among the individuals who are the part of their in-group and emerge in the form of culture of reference, this ultimately effect career of individuals. Due to Biradri (brotherhood) system in Pakistan people of that system, support the individuals (in-group) more who are in danger or at the lower position

as compared to the outer group. Importance of harmonious interpersonal relationships and self-sacrifice for the betterment and success of in-group exist in culture of Pakistan [53]. Strong relationships exist among the individuals who are belonging to the same group (in-group) or Biraderi [54]. This connection and social networking developed for the cooperation and assistance of the people who mostly belong to in-group [55]. This strong connection among the members of group leads to successful professional career.

Sifarish and favoritism are the other dimensions that exist deeply in the culture of Pakistan. According to Mangi *et al.* [56] individuals who have strong networking i.e. sifarish (favor/approach/unfair-means) from top management or proprietor of the firm through sycophancy acquire more favors in HRM processes like promotion and jump to career and achievements ladder swiftly in Pakistan. During the research of Mangi and associates, a respondent (from Pakistan) explains that we are living in a culture of networking and sifarish based recruitment, promotion and career success. Sycophancy and corruption are deeply rooted in our culture [56]. Sifarish comes from politician and civil-military forces for selection, promotion and rewards allocation and we cannot get rid of this curse and evil [51]. There are huge numbers of individuals in Pakistan who were making innocent Pakistanis foolish. Because of strong support from personal and political party, they are still moving forward on career ladder in Pakistan. In fact, networking becomes as a "necessary evil" for career success in Pakistan. So on the basis of above literature we can develop hypothesis that:

Hypothesis 2: Social networking (Personal and Professional) is significantly and positively related to career success.

Theoretical Framework:



MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodology: A cross-sectional study approach is used in this study to collect data from various public sector organizations. To make the study more relevant and realistic, the data was collected from different public sector employees providing a variety of different services. The unit of analysis for the study consisted of employees of grade 16 to 20 which included managerial and non-managerial level of employees. The public sector organizations that are included in the study are; Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), National Housing Authority (NHA), Police Department, Ministries of Pakistan and Air Weapon Complex. To generalize the results throughout the public, these selected organizations provide diverse services and are recognized as leading and well-known organizations in Pakistan.

Measures: For the purpose of data collection personally administered questionnaires were used. Thus a convenience sampling technique was adopted. The questionnaire was structured in such a way that the beginning section was started with some demographic questions such as respondent's age, gender and marital status. Then it was followed by specific questions related to the key variables of the study. An authentic and reliable scale was used for the variables adopted from past research studies. A 5-point Likert scale, as the most preferred tool for analysis by researchers, was used in this study for measuring all the important variables. The scale ranges from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly Agree. A total number of 200 questionnaires were circulated among the respondents out of which 173 questionnaires were received back. But overall the research response was very good. Only those questionnaires were analyzed that were completely filled. Thus the response rate was 87.8%. The analysis of the respondent's demographic composition showed that 13.2% of the respondents were male while 86.8% were female who took part in the survey. Marital status consists of 28.9% married and 71.1% single. While age group of 33-37 shows highest response rate about 36.8%. Although these respondents' demographic elements are not part of the analysis but description of

Table 1: Alpha reliability

Scale	Items	Cronbach Alpha
Career Success	10	0.730
Social Networking	14	0.772
Human Capital	4	0.713

these elements are useful in a way that it helps to highlight the composition of the sample.

Scale Used: We have adopted the scales from the previous studies i.e., measuring Career Success the scale was adopted from the study of Judge *et al.* [57]. The scale consists of 10 items. Social Networking scale was adopted from Forret and Dougherty (2001) study [58]. The scale consists of twenty one (21) items but we have taken only those fourteen (14) items which were directly relevant to our issue. According to Chen (2011) Human Capital was measured by a 4-item scale [59]. To ensure reliability, all the scales were measured by Cronbach Alpha. The reliability of the scales is shown in the following Table 1.

Tool Used for Data Analysis: A tool that is mostly used for data analysis is SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. In this study the analysis of data is also done by SPSS. The genuine version of SPSS 16 was processed to analyze the data into descriptive statistics, correlations and linear regression analysis. Complete description of the analysis is given in the following section of results and discussions.

RESULTS

Table 2 shows the correlation matrix for the variables incorporated in this research. The Table conclude Mean, Standards deviations and inter-correlations of dependent variable and independent variables.

Table 3 shows the direct relationship of human capital with career success. The result shows that human capital has a significantly positive relationship ($\beta=0.140$) with career success. Moreover, human capital explained 4.3% variation in career success. So, hypothesis that human capital and career success has positive relationship is accepted.

Table 2: Correlation Studies

		Std. Deviation	Mean	Career success	Human capital	Social networking
Career success	Pearson Correlation	.54497	3.5349	1.000		
Human capital	Pearson Correlation	.80755	3.1678	.208*	1.000	
Social networking	Pearson Correlation	.59766	3.1457	.285**	.809**	1.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed),n=152

Table 3: Regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	Beta		Std. Error
1	(Constant)		
	Human capital	0.140	2.602 0.010

Dependent Variable: C.success, $R^2=0.043$, Adj $R^2=0.037$, $F=6.771$, sig=.010

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	Beta		Std. Error
1	(Constant)		
	Social networking	0.259	3.635 0.000

Dependent Variable: C.success, $R^2=0.081$, Adj $R^2=0.075$, $F=13.210$, sig=0.000

Table 4 reveals a direct relationship of social networking with career success. The analysis of research data highlights that social networking has a significantly positive relationship ($\beta=0.259$) with career success. Moreover, social networking explained 8.1% variation in career success. So, hypothesis that social networking and career success has positive relationship is accepted.

DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in the public sector of Pakistan. This paper has explored the impact of human capital and social networking as key determinants of employee's career success. The key concern of this paper was to see which phenomenon (human capital or social networking) has more influence on individual's career success in public sector organizations in Pakistan. The results prove significant role of human capital in one's career advancement. This is in consistent with the standpoint of human capital theory that education and training experience are the most fundamental factors for high compensation and in light of this view point these fundamental factors positively influence career success [60]. Prior research also identifies a positive relationship between human capital and career success. According to Ballout [61] there are three approaches in order to elucidate predictors of career success, in which human capital is related to individual approach. The main focus of this approach is on the individual who expands her/his human capital and strives to increase her/his experience, education and skills in order to gain success in his/her career. Moreover findings of Ng *et al.* [9] also support our results and identified human capital as a frequent predictor of career success. Authors further stated that

extensive work experience is a factor of human capital that is a source of value and competitive edge and promote individuals to become more attractive for promotion. Our study shows that the different factors of human capital such as work experience, education and continuous work history have a significant positive effect on career advancement. The results are in line with the previous studies [11, 12].

Like human capital, social networking also has a significant relationship with career success. Our research results sheds the light on the importance of networking for career advancement through different questions like employees social gathering with the people from the work, contacts with old friends, professional seminars and workshops, frequent job promotion and extra rewards etc. Results of this research are in consistent with the previous researches which revealed the strong role of social networking in HR management practices especially job promotion and career advancement studies [62, 63, 64, 50, 51, 54]. In Pakistan, employees who are involved in network building tend to be more satisfied with their career advancements. As mentioned by Khilji [49] and Saher [50] in Pakistan social networking is the most crucial element for high salaries and career growth. This study supported the argument of Lyon [52] in which he emphasized the notion that in developing countries culture is mainly fostered by specialized relationships and domestic model.

CONCLUSIONS

The results and discussion presented in the last section, has highlighted a significant positive relationship among the variables as proposed by the hypotheses. The result pointed out that human capital and social networkings are two main contributing factors to career success in public sector organizations in Pakistan. The findings of current study has also highlighted an interesting fact that in public sector of Pakistan the impact of social networking is stronger than human capital on career success. Therefore, our results have also supported argument given by Khilji [49] that in case of two candidates with same educational level, the one maintaining stronger networking will get more career advancement as compared to the other one. Our study has additionally concluded that the workers supported people from their network/in-group toward the higher echelons instead of the people with good qualification and professional expertise as mentioned in various studies conducted in Pakistan [50, 51, 54].

Career advancements are important in making employees satisfied with their current position. To make employee satisfied with his/her job is not only important challenge faced by organization but if attained fully, can result in overall organizational success. Consistently, career success is appeared as an important concern for both employees and employer in contemporary environment. The results of this study can be highly useful for managers to formulate strategies to create fair environment for career success and curb the role social networking career advancement process. From the perspective of managers the study contributes in creating awareness about the certain attitude related to the determinants of career success, which in return help managers specially related to human resource to devise new strategies and policies that could help in selecting, retaining and promoting employees. Although there are many blue prints and previous studies available from which managers could help their employees to advance in career. But the important thing is that these strategies and ideas should be adapted in the special setting of Pakistan. In the context of Pakistan although social networking appear as an imperative factor in determining success in one's profession but managers cannot ruled out the importance of human capital that is basic foundation in pursuing any career. As an HR manger, while making important policies for selection of employees, it should be considered that along with education background and strong experiences, social networking is also significant for helping employees in career advancement. It is obvious from past research analysis and current study results that social networking is one of the important factor in building strong career especially in developing countries. Managers should also be aware of the fact that in Pakistani organizations social networking has been more used in a negative way that is usually immoral and leads to unjust acts. But to utilize its benefits fruitfully, social networking should be used in an affirmative way. To shed light in a more positive manner social networking can facilitate managers in building respectable relationships with local firms as well as with foreign firms. It can further help in developing element of trust in sharing valuable information and accepting business from the local markets, which will expand the economic market and will ultimately help in competing globally.

From research perspective, this study has significantly contributed to literature by investigating important determinants of career success specifically in Pakistani perspective. Furthermore our study has

provided important guidelines to the researchers, on the basis of which they can develop new models and/or enhance old models and frameworks by highlighting other important factors that could impact career success along with human capital and social networking.

Our study also has some limitations. The very first and obvious limitation is that only public sector of Pakistan was considered in the research, while it ignores the private sector that is also contributed enormously to the GDP of the country. The other limitation is that only those public sector organizations were selected that were located in Islamabad-Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Another limitation of the study is that some of the items of scales were not suitable in context of public sectors employees. So the results cannot be generalized to the whole public sector of the Pakistan and other countries as well. Though these are some of the limitations to the study but the results are reasonable and justified from the literature review and are appropriate to verify the main objective of this study. Anyhow, future research can include private sector and also increase the scope of study by examining organizations of different regions of Pakistan beyond Islamabad-Rawalpindi. Number of respondents should also be increased in order to enhance the effectiveness of this study. Besides this, future research should also consider other regions for more realistic and globally generalizable results.

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