

# Proactive Personality and Subjective Career Success among Middle Level Managers – A Pilot Study

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## Abstract:

Proactive personality “as a dispositional construct that identifies differences among people in the extent to which they take action to influence their environment”. Today in this competitive world, change appears to be the only constant, competition as a norm, and job security a day-dreamer’s fantasy. In such a backdrop being proactive is a necessity rather than a luxury. Literature shows the importance of proactive people in many dimensions. Many organizations preserved proactive behaviors as a role requirement, emphasizing its value to employees, and hiring applicants with a proactive orientation.

The influence of proactive personality has been studied in varied fields such as career success job performance through a social capital perspective transformational and charismatic leadership and job search success. The study shows that the effects of situational judgment effectiveness and proactive personality on work perceptions and outcomes. Research shows that proactive personality moderated the interactive effect of job autonomy and demands on employee strain. Their results were consistent with the premise that proactive employees take advantage of high job control to manage the demands they face more effectively, whereas passive employees do not take advantage of greater autonomy to this end.

This study shall be a pilot study to understanding the relationship between proactive personality and subjective career success among managers in an organization in the study region. The study was carried out in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh where the sample units were middle level managers working in the financial institutions. The structured questionnaire was used to measure the variables and to understand their relationship. The result of the study showed that there is significant relation between the variables.

**Keywords:** Proactive personality, subjective career success, middle-level managers, Organization, Pilot Study.

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## 1. Introduction

Today in the global competition, the organization's plan, recruit and selects employees to attain their goal and objectives of growth,

expansion, production, and maximization of profits in every domain. Yet, on one hand, employees join organizations to fulfill their work-related expectations and desires. Both

organizational requirements and employee expectations are never constant but changing. For an instance, the conventional views that every employee would jump at the chance for a promotion, that competent people would somehow emerge within the organization to fill the vacancies that arose, or that a valuable employee would always be a valuable employee are no longer true. Whereas on the other face of the coin says, organizations capacity to meet the employee's unique expectations are limited by organizational constraints. As such, managers are now confronted with the new and unexpected complexities in their efforts to effectively utilize their human resources. This has created a situation of conflict in the organizations. If this conflict is not resolved properly, the organization will not be able to get the best out of their employees. Such a situation calls for matching employees expectations with the organizational requirements. This is done through career planning and development. In a broad outlook, the term career is referred to as all the jobs held by a person during his working life or in the nutshell, it is an individual's entire work life. Whereas in a narrow perspective, it can be defined as the succession of jobs and or ranks held by a person in a particular organization. An individual's career inception with job placement and conclude with departure from the organization, which may be in the form of retirement, resignation or death. In between, the career progression consists of changing tasks, tenure in various jobs, temporary or permanent promotions, transfers etc.

Career success research draws on career theory and, therefore, on the ideas included in career theory; that is, its underlying definitions, concepts, relationships and assumptions (Arthur et al., 2005). It is defined as an outcome of a person's career experiences and involves the individual's evaluation of desirable work-related outcomes at any point during these experiences

(Arthur et al., 2005; Gattiker and Larwood, 1990; Hennequin, 2007; Judge and Bretz, 1994; Poon, 2004). There are two broad strands of research in the career success literature: different ways of construing career success and how they are (or are not) related to each other; and what predicts and influences career success (Arnold and Cohen, 2008).

Career success is both objectives as well as subjective in nature. Objective success such as pay or hierarchical position and it also comprises the beholder's subjective success, which is an individual's evaluation of his/her career (Abele & Wiese, 2008; Arnold & Cohen, 2008; Dette et al., 2004; Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008; Heslin, 2003, 2005; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Ng et al., 2005; Nicholson & De Waal-Andrews, 2005). Recent meta-analyses revealed correlations between objective and subjective success not higher than .30 (Dette et al., 2004; Ng et al., 2005). Dependent on the comparison standard, i.e. self-versus others, subjective success can be conceptualized as a self-referent subjective success or as the other-referent subjective success (Abele & Wiese, 2008; Dette et al., 2004; Heslin, 2003, 2005). In self-referent subjective success assessment, an individual compares his/her career relative to personal standards and aspirations. Self-referent subjective career success is usually measured as career satisfaction or job satisfaction (e.g. Boudreau, Boswell, & Judge, 2001; Bozionelos, 2004; Judge et al., 1995). In the other-referent assessment, an individual compares his/her career relative to an external standard, for instance, a reference group or a reference person. Heslin (2003) found that more than two-thirds of his respondents used other-referent criteria in determining their subjective success.

## 2. Objectives of the study

- i. To study the relationship between proactive personality and subjective career success in the study region.
- ii. To analyze the subjective career success among the managers with respect to demographic variables.

## 3. Literature Review

**Vandenberghe&Basak (2013)** finds that Career commitment was positively related to Time 1 turnover intention, with this relationship being stronger at high levels of proactivity. Proactive personality also interacted with career commitment in predicting Time 2 internal networking and job embeddedness, such that these relationships were significantly positive only at low levels of proactivity. Finally, career commitment was positively related to Time 2 turnover, but this relationship was not moderated by proactive personality.

**McCarthy, J. F. (2002)** Observes that having a proactive personality may help jump start career-enhancing behaviors. The finding of their study showed that being proactive, generating innovative solutions to challenges, playing an active role in managing one's career, and understanding organizational politics all seem integral to career success.

**Jiang, Z. (2017)** Study conducted on Chinese adult workers to examine the relationships between proactive personality, thriving, and career adaptability. It was found that the positive relationship between proactive personality and career adaptability could be mediated by thriving. Additionally, proactive personality was found to moderate the positive relationship between thriving and career adaptability, with this relationship being stronger among workers with

less proactive personalities. It was also identified that the indirect effect of proactive personality on career adaptability via thriving was stronger for high rather than low proactive individuals.

**Uyet al (2015)** attempted the study involving a diverse group of 750 undergraduate students from Singapore showed that entrepreneurial alertness to opportunities partially mediates the relation of proactive personality to boundaryless career mindset and career adaptability, but not to self-directed or protean career attitudes.

**Hsieh & Huang (2014)** found that there is a significant and positive relationship between proactive personality and Career decision self-efficacy (CDSE). Their study suggested that college students, who tend to have a highly proactive personality and therefore are more willing to show initiative, to confront and solve problems, and to take advantage of opportunities to improve their current situation, appear to feel more efficacious in terms of making career decisions.

## 4. Research Methodology

The present study is basically a pilot study trying to understand the feasibility of the study in the study region. The sample consists of 18 managers from the financial institutions which includes bank, insurance, NBFC, brokerage house etc. . The study is based on primary data supported by relevant secondary information. The structured questionnaire was adopted and modified to collect the data. The instrument was tested and found to be reliable and used it to collect the data for the study. The test was conducted in the state of Assam & Arunachal Pradesh.

### 5. Instrument Reliability Analysis:

| Variables                              |                              | Adopted and modified from            | Cronbach's Alpha | No. of Items |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| <b>Subjective Career Success scale</b> | <i>Career Satisfaction</i>   | <i>Daniel Spurr et al (2011)</i>     | .766             | 5            |
|  | <i>Interpersonal success</i> | <i>Gattiker &amp; Larwood (1986)</i> | .706             | 8            |
|  | <i>Life success</i>          |                                      |                  |              |
|  | <i>Job Satisfaction</i>      | <i>Greenhaus et al. (1990).</i>      | .691             | 5            |
| <b>Proactive Personality scale</b>     |                              | <i>(Bateman and Crant, 1993)</i>     | .858             | 10           |

### Analysis

The data collected were tabulated and analyzed to fulfill the objectives of the study. The data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and correlation study were done between the variables. The regression model was developed understand the clarity of the relations among the variables in the study. The followings are the analysis based on the objectives of the study.

### Analysis – I

The attempt was made to understand the relationship between proactive personality and career success. The correlation analysis was performed against the data obtained and the following results were found.

#### Correlations

|                           |                     | Career Success | Personality |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Subjective Career Success | Pearson Correlation | 1              | .424*       |
|                           | Sig. (1-tailed)     |                | .040        |
|                           | N                   | 18             | 18          |
| Proactive Personality     | Pearson Correlation | .424*          | 1           |
|                           | Sig. (1-tailed)     | .040           |             |
|                           | N                   | 18             | 18          |

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

The study shows that there is a significant relationship between subjective career success and proactive personality. The value of R obtained is 0.424\* that shows the significance between the variables.

#### Model Summary

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .424 <sup>a</sup> | .180     | .128              | .33481                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), proactive personality

#### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

| Model |             | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t     | Sig. |
|-------|-------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
|       |             | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |      |
| 1     | (Constant)  | 2.520                       | .636       |                           | 3.965 | .001 |
|       | Personality | .307                        | .164       | .424                      | 1.871 | .080 |

a. Dependent Variable: Career Success

The regression model hence derived is as follows:

$$Y = 2.52 + 0.307X$$

Where Y signifies the dependent variable i.e. subjective career success and X signifies independent variable viz. proactive personality. The value of intercept ‘a’ obtained in the model is 2.52 and the value of the constant ‘b’ is 0.307.

**Analysis – II**

The study followed the simple random sampling method. The demographic profile of the respondents shows that the total sample consists of 18 managers out of which 13 (Thirteen) are male and 05 (Five) are female. About the marital status, 15 (Fifteen) are married and 03 (Three) are unmarried.

In term of educational qualification most of the managers having post gradation degree i.e. (n=9) followed by degree (n=5) and diploma (n=2).

**Gender**

|            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Male | 13        | 72.2    | 72.2          | 72.2               |
| Female     | 5         | 27.8    | 27.8          | 100.0              |
| Total      | 18        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Marital Status**

|               | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Married | 15        | 83.3    | 83.3          | 83.3               |
| Unmarried     | 3         | 16.7    | 16.7          | 100.0              |
| Total         | 18        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Educational Qualification**

|               | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Diploma | 2         | 11.1    | 11.1          | 11.1               |
| Degree        | 5         | 27.8    | 27.8          | 38.9               |
| P.G           | 9         | 50.0    | 50.0          | 88.9               |
| M.Phil        | 1         | 5.6     | 5.6           | 94.4               |
| Ph.D.         | 1         | 5.6     | 5.6           | 100.0              |
| Total         | 18        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Nature of Qualification**

|                        | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid General          | 3         | 16.7    | 16.7          | 16.7               |
| Professional/Technical | 15        | 83.3    | 83.3          | 100.0              |
| Total                  | 18        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Marital Status**

|               | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Married | 15        | 83.3    | 83.3          | 83.3               |

|           |    |       |       |       |
|-----------|----|-------|-------|-------|
| Unmarried | 3  | 16.7  | 16.7  | 100.0 |
| Total     | 18 | 100.0 | 100.0 |       |

**Correlations**

|                |                                   | Marital Status | Subjective Career Success |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Marital Status | Pearson Correlation               | 1              | -.471*                    |
|                | Sig. (1-tailed)                   |                | .024                      |
|                | Sum of Squares and Cross-products | 2.500          | -1.102                    |
|                | Covariance                        | .147           | -.065                     |
|                | N                                 | 18             | 18                        |
| Career Success | Pearson Correlation               | -.471*         | 1                         |
|                | Sig. (1-tailed)                   | .024           |                           |
|                | Sum of Squares and Cross-products | -1.102         | 2.186                     |
|                | Covariance                        | -.065          | .129                      |
|                | N                                 | 18             | 18                        |

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

The study shows that there is a significant relationship between marital status and subjective career success. The result signifies the negative (-ve) relationship between the respective variables. However, the analysis result also shows that there are no significant relations between subjective career success and other demographic variables.

**6. Limitations of the study**

The study is just a glimpse of the possible study in a broader domain which was based on a pilot study. The result of the study may not be generalized since it was conducted with 18 samples population and hence it is only a guiding path for further study.

**7. Scope for further study**

The present study was a pilot study and this may carry forward in the larger domain to understand the true picture of the relationship between career success and proactive personality. The study was conducted using only one independent variable and henceforth the similar study may be conducted using other variables too, which may

give the clear portrait of the cause and effects of the career success and its respective variables.

**8. Conclusion**

The paper attempt to understand the feasibility of the study in the region for which a pilot study was conducted. The various literature witness that there is a relationship between career management and personality in the broad domain. Several studies were made in the context of the western world and found to be significant. The present study throws light on the above context and helps to understand the relation between the variables in the northeastern region of India. The results show that the study on career success using the variable viz. proactive personality is feasible in nature and may be carried out in the study region with the respective natures of samples populations. It was also found that the marital status has a negative relation with career success which may be valuable insight to study on this particular domain. This paper may be considered as a foundation work in the respective domain in the area of career success.

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