
**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROACTIVE PERSONALITY AND CAREER
SELF-MANAGEMENT BEHAVIORS: CAREER RESILIENCE ACTS AS A
MEDIATOR**

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROACTIVE PERSONALITY AND CAREER SELF-MANAGEMENT BEHAVIORS: CAREER RESILIENCE AS A MEDIATOR

Yip Siew Ling

This study aims to explore the career self-management behaviors of office staffs who are working with construction organizations in Malaysia. The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors among the employees. Besides, this study also intends to examine the mediating role of career resilience in the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors. The results of this study contribute to the clarification of the individual factor (proactive personality) can influences the career self-management behaviors as well as highlight the important role of career resilience in determining employees' career self-management behaviors.

ABSTRAK

HUBUNGAN ANTARA KEPERIPADIAN PROAKTIF DAN PERLAKUAN PENGURUSAN KERJAYA DIRI: DAYA KETAHANAN DIRI SEBAGAI PENGANTARAN

Yip Siew Ling

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka perlakuan pengurusan kerjaya diri dalam kalangan pekerja yang sedang berkhidmat untuk beberapa buah organisasi di mana organisasi-organisasi itu merupakan organisasi dalam industry pembinaan di Malaysia. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan antara keperibadian proaktif dan perlakuan pengurusan kerjaya diri dalam kalangan pekerja. Selain itu, kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti peranan daya ketahanan diri sebagai aspek pengantaran dalam hubungan antara keperibadian proaktif dan pengaruhnya pada perlakuan pengurusan kerjaya diri dalam kalangan pekerja. Hasil daripada kajian ini memberikan sumbangan pada klarifikasi dari aspek faktor individu (keperibadian proaktif) boleh mempengaruhi perlakuan pengurusan kerjaya diri serta menekankan peranan penting daya ketahanan diri dalam menentukan perlakuan pengurusan kerjaya diri dalam kalangan perkerja.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to describe the background of the study, statement of problems, general and specific objectives, research hypotheses and the definition of key terms used. Besides, the conceptual framework, the limitations of this study as well as the significant of this study for theoretical and practical contributions are also presented in this chapter.

Traditionally, people perceived a career as a form of progression up an ordered hierarchy within an organization or profession. This means they perceived their career development happened within an organization or profession. Nowadays, a career means an individual's work and life roles over his or her lifespan. People can progress through their career horizontally as well as vertically. They have responsibility to ensure they are well equipped with proper and relevant knowledge and skills to complete the jobs. It is one of the crucial elements for them to make sure they have proper management of their career

progression. They also need to make sure they are “wholesome” in the workplaces in order to be successful in their jobs as well as their careers.

Previously, employees could depend on organizations and managers to assume a parental role in their careers (Kahnweiler, 2006). They practiced the “do an adequate job here and we will take care of you and your career” concept at that time (Kahnweiler, 2006). The employees would have high job security in the organizations at that time. However, due to the advancement of technology and the economical environment keeps on changing nowadays, the organizations and the managers cannot apply that kind of concept anymore. They have to select and retain outstanding employees in order to stay competitive in the marketplace. The employees are not being protected by the job security in the organizations anymore. Each employee needs to take his or her own responsibility to manage and develop his or her career nowadays. The employees should take initiative to put more efforts in managing their own careers. This means that individual factor plays an important role in deciding the career pathway of an employee if compare to the organizational support factor.

Commonly, people always understand the idea of career self-management, but they are not sure what they should do to perform the idea (Mallon & Walton, 2005). This will cause the individuals fail to fulfill satisfaction and even achievement in their careers. This will directly influence the effectiveness and successful of the organizations. In this situation, the managers play important roles in helping the employees to identify and get the efficient skills and knowledge in managing their careers. The most important factor contributes to effective career self-management is the individual factor. A prior study which had done by Chiaburu, Baker and Pitatriu (2006), supported that individual characteristic such as proactive personality had positive relationship with career self-management behaviors of the employees. Regard to this, managers have to be more concern and understand about the relationship between the individual characteristics and career self-management behaviors through exploring various studies which have been done by researchers regarding to that topic.

Besides that, it has been suggested that the relationship between personality and performance may not be consistent across all individuals in all settings and that identifying mediators at work in these relationships may increase the validity of predicting performance (Beatty, Cleveland, & Murphy, 2001; Schneider & Hough, 1995). This incident also might happen on the relationship between personality and career self-management behaviors. For an example, according to Chiaburu, Baker and Pitariu (2006), the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors was mediated by career resilience. Therefore, there is a need for the managers to identify the type of mediator that can influence the relationship between employee's personality and career self-management behaviors.

Conceptually, career management is one of the components of career development. Career development can bring numerous beneficial developments to both individual and organization. With the aim to promote those developments in the organization, an organization can assist the employees by providing training and career counseling to them. However, the employees should have self initiative to manage and plan their career progress and seek out the ways to develop their skills fully. This means they should have career self-management behaviors. The individual factor such as proactive personality might play an important role to determine how they manage their career management individually. The escalating of changing environment which might develop career resilience among the employees at the same time also might influence their career self-management behaviors. Therefore, there is a need for the organization and employees to have more understanding about the concept as well as the relationship between proactive personality, career self-management and career resilience in their life.

1.1 Background of Study

There has been a growing interest in the theory and practice of career self-management "by which individuals . . . engage in career strategies that increase

the probability that career goals will be achieved” (Noe, 1996), now recognized to be an important part of the career development process (King, 2004; Sturges, Conway, Guest, & Liefoghe, 2005). London (1983) also implicitly addressed that the shorter cycles of success and failure within the context of a single individual’s career, in addition to suggesting that the career may be considered in the context of an individual, rather than within the context of a single organization

The employees need to be proactive about furthering their career development in an environment where, it is suggested, organizations can no longer offer jobs for life (Arnold, 1997; De Fillippi & Arthur, 1994; Herriot & Pemberton, 1995; Seibert, Crant & Kraimer, 1999). It is also argued that changing career values and priorities make employees more inclined to take control of their own careers and their management (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Mirvis & Hall, 1994). Moreover, careers are increasingly boundary-less, and not confined to one organization, requiring individuals to take charge of their own careers (Mirvis & Hall, 1994).

Research on self-directed career behaviors and on career self-management has grown substantially in prominence over the past decade (Briscoe et al., 2006; King, 2004). Although Baruch (2006) noted that organizational influence is not to be underestimated in the career landscape, individual initiative (i.e. career self-management) continues to hold primary theoretical and practical interest in the study of careers due to the ever-changing nature of the field. One key to broadening our understanding of career self-management is through the examination of the individual factors that are likely to influence it (King, 2004).

Of particular interest in the current study is the relationship of the trait of proactive personality to career self-management behaviors. Originally conceptualized by Bateman and Crant (1993), proactive personality is characterized by initiative taking and opportunity seeking. The core idea that an individual can actively shape his or her own environment, rather than passively react to events, is at the heart of proactive personality research. Since its emergence in the early 1990s, proactive personality has gained steam as a valid construct and a predictor of organizationally relevant outcomes, including

performance (Crant, 1995), work adjustment (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003), and career success (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001).

Moreover, it has been suggested that the relationship between personality and performance may not be consistent across all individuals in all settings and that identifying moderators and mediators at work in these relationships may increase the validity of predicting performance (Beaty, Cleveland, & Murphy, 2001; Schneider & Hough, 1995). Unfortunately, until today, the majority of research on proactive personality has primarily examined main effects of the construct, rather than the examination of potential mediators or moderators of proactive personality and subsequent outcomes (Crant, 2000). Seibert et al. (1999) also state that “it would be fruitful to examine the behaviors that mediate the relationship between proactive personality and career success”, adding that “possible mediating behaviors may include active career planning, and initiating new projects”.

However, there are still have some past studies which revealed the important roles of potential mediators in the proactive personality and performance relationship, in where the studies have shown individual differences in tendencies to engage in self-management (Gerhardt, Rode, & Peterson, 2007). Specifically, conscientiousness was found to be positively related to self-management, whereas neuroticism was negatively related. Therefore, there is a need to include mediator while investigating the relationship between proactive personality and career self management behaviors.

Regarding to this study, the researcher proposes career resilience, which consists of characteristics such as a belief in self, willingness to take risks, and need for achievement (King, 1997; London, 1983) has mediating effect on the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors. A previous study which has done by Chiaburu, Baker and Pitariu (2006), showed that the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors was mediated by career resilience. Besides, the merits of building a career resilient workforce also have been documented in the literature (London, 1993; London, 1996; Waterman et al., 1994). Therefore, researcher interests to

find the effect of career resilience on the career self-management behaviors in workplace nowadays.

Recently, the researcher conducts a research in five construction companies at Bintulu and Kuching, Sarawak. The common characteristic shared by those five construction companies is those five companies provide comprehensive services in real estate development, building construction, building services and civil engineering works. One of the companies is Paling Construction Sdn Bhd. It was established in 1980 and it has progressed to become a well-known construction organization today due to the contributions from its loyal customers, clients and faithfully staffs who had continuously supporting the vision of the company (Paling Group of Companies, 2008).

The management of Paling recognised that human resources is the most valuable asset in the company and therefore the organization provides the best welfare and the best training for every staffs regardless of ranking and position (Paling Group of Companies, 2008). The staffs are always being prepared for new challenges in terms of technology, methodologies, environment, policies and people (Paling Group of Companies, 2008). They are being equipped with up to date skills and technical knowledge in operating its day to day business activities (Paling Group of Companies, 2008). The other four construction companies also hold the same ideology and concept as hold by Paling Construction Sdn Bhd.

The successfulness of an organization depends very much on the employees. Therefore, the career success of the employees also has strong linkage to the successfulness of the organization. Employees have to take initiative to manage their careers in order to remain competitive. On the same time, the organization also has to understand and know about the relationship between employees' personality, career resilience and career self-management behaviors in order to provide counseling for them in managing their careers.

1.2 Problem Statement

In Malaysia, the Third Outline Perspective Plan, which constitutes the second decade of development for the Malaysian economy, projects a net increase of 230 per cent for engineers and more than 184 per cent for information and communication specialists from year 2001 to 2010 (Economic Planning Unit 2001). The biggest challenge for the organizations is to develop and retain workers than to hire them (Hong & Hor 2000). Besides, a study conducted by Lim (2001) reported that Malaysian employees in general are willing to stay with their current employers for less than three years. Another survey conducted by Husna (2005) showed that 74 per cent of the country's younger employees (less than 35 years of age) said they had changed employers over the past five years, with 39 per cent intending to change employers again within the next two years.

Based on the above phenomena, the career self-management behaviors of the employees are the crucial elements to guarantee that they can be more competent and employable. There is a need to understand and retain the high quality of knowledgeable employees in order to ensure successful of the organizations. In order to do so, the organizations need to have clear understanding about the career self-management behaviors of the employees. It is very significant to study the career self-management of the employees in order to help the organizations to motivate employees to plan and manage their careers. From the perspective of the organizations, the failure of organizations to motivate employees to plan and manage their careers can lead shortage of employees to fill open positions, lower employee commitment and inappropriate use of money allocated to training and development programs.

Besides, the employees who are lack of career management also can result in frustration, feelings of not being valued by the organizations and being unable to find a suitable employment of job change due to mergers, acquisitions, restructuring or downsizing of the organizations. Therefore, there is a need to explore the factors especially the personality factor which has impact on the employees' career self-management behaviors.

Moreover, it is known that the concept of job resilience has gained recognition in a past few years. This concept enables a person to bounce back during hardship that becomes a major concern to both individuals and organizations. However, many analysts are suggesting that today's labour market and associated work environments are changing at an escalating rate and many people are not coping effectively with these changes (n.a, 2007). Regard to this statement, it is significantly important for the researcher to study about the career resilience of the employees in the organization.

Furthermore, the Office of Personnel Management, a U.S. Federal Agency, recognized resilience as being one of the eight most significant characteristics for change agents; human resource theorists have identified resilience as one of six competencies needed by the "top performers of the future" (Marcus & Pringle, 1995); and "organizational behaviorists have identified resilience as being one of four skills necessary for effective leadership" (Kinder & Robertson, 1994). Those statements revealed the three basic challenges of life which include being able to earn a living and take independent care of oneself in the world, being competent in human relations, and having the resilience to bounce back from adversity and persevere in one's aspirations (Branden, 1994). Therefore, career resilience is a topic apparently worthy of further study and understanding, especially in the employment context.

Although many researches had studied about the career self-management topic, but there has not been much effort on research on the topic of relationship between individual factors and career self-management behaviors especially towards the employees in Malaysia. Research suggests that there may be personality traits that are linked to the tendency to engage in self-management, but limited research has explored this idea empirically (Morossanova, 2003). For example, only a research done in an organization at Eastern United States showed that proactive personality had positive relationship with career self-management (Chiaburu, Baker & Pitariu, 2006).

Moreover, there is also limited research has been done in Malaysia regard to the mediating role of career resilience on the relationship between proactive

personality and career self-management behaviors. To date, the researcher only found a research which was done by Chiaburu, Baker and Pitariu (2006) at Eastern United State. The study found that the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors was mediated by career resilience.

Thus, the question appears here is do Malaysia's worker's perceptions of having proactive personality influences his or her career self-management behaviors? The question remains to what extent is the Malaysia's workforce resilient can mediate the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management in such environment of change and to face the globalization. With this, the researcher has interest to investigate and understand more about the both issues among the employees. The results of the study might likely to be of interest to managers and organizations interested in determining which employees are more likely to engage in career self-management behaviors and under what conditions will such behaviors occur.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1) Is there a relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors?
- 2) Does career resilience mediate the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors?

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objectives

This study will examine the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors among the employees, and to explore intervening factor such as career resilience among the employees.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The purpose of this study is to

1. Determine the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors.
2. Examine the mediating role of career resilience in the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the research was based on the career self-management behaviors. The dependent variable is employees' career self-management behaviors. The selected independent variable is proactive personality and career resilience acts as a mediator factor. This framework was used to develop the hypotheses for this study.

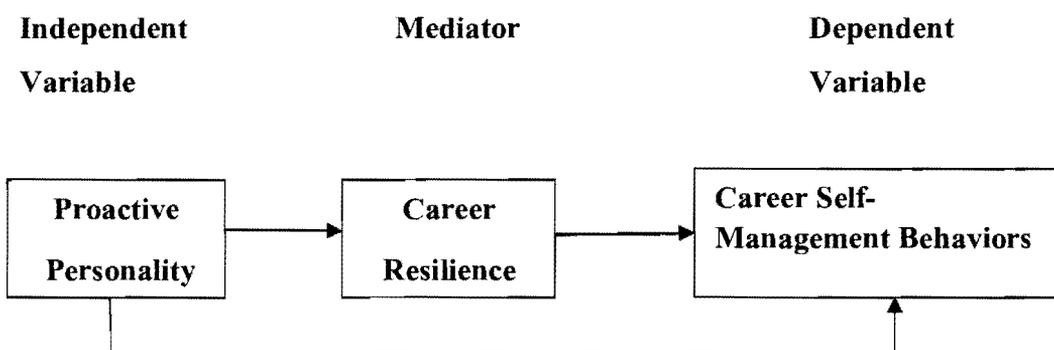


Figure 1.0 Research Framework of the study (Chiaburu, Baker & Pitariu, 2006)

1.6 Research Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypotheses 1(H1) : There is a significant relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors.

According to Chiaburu, Baker and Pitariu (2006), proactive personality had positive relationship with career self-management behaviors.

Hypotheses 2(H2) : Career resilience mediates the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors.

According to Chiaburu, Baker and Pitariu (2006), the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors was mediated by career resilience. This indicated although proactive employees are more likely to engage in career self-management behaviors, career resilience is also an important factor.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Proactive Personality

Conceptual Definition

Proactive personality is a stable disposition (Bateman and Crant, 1993; Crant, 2000), characterizing “one who is relatively unconstrained by situational forces and who effects environmental change (Crant, 1995). Someone who is proactive is a goal achievable and they will reach out to make things happen and get things done.

Operational Definition

Proactive personality may be conceived as a personal resource for achieving work goals, fostering personal goals and handling work-related problems actively. Proactive individuals always describe themselves as always looking for better ways to complete their tasks, being excited by

seeing their ideas turn into reality and even constantly on the lookout to improve their life.

1.7.2 Career Resilience

Conceptual Definition

According to Collard et.al (1996), “Career resilience is the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, even when circumstances are discouraging or disruptive”.

Operational Definition

Career resilience includes the ability to cope with negative situations (the ability of workers to respond and bouncing back from the difficulties), the ability to adapt changes in workplace (workers able to welcome and adapt to job and organizational changes) and also the ability to believe in self to overcome negative situations (workers feel self-confident and optimistic in handling difficulties). Individuals who have career resilience are willing to take risks and belief in self. Resilience provides the personal drive to continue trying to face the obstacles and it is the mental ability to cope with difficult situations.

1.7.2 Career Self-Management

Conceptual Definition

Career self-management is defined by scholars as the degree to which employees regularly gather information and plan for career problem-solving and decision-making (Kossek et al., 1998). It is

accepting of one's responsibility for the strategic and proactive management of one's own career.

Operational Definition

Career self-management refers to a person to accept his or her responsibility for the strategic and proactive management of his or her own career. Employees who have career self-management become more aware of their own interests, values, strengths, gain information about job opportunities within and outside the company, identify career goals and establish action plans to achieve their career goals.

1.8 Significance of the Study

There are four main significance of this study about the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors and also career resilience acts as a mediator in that relationship. The significance of this study is for the organization, employees, researchers and for the society as well.

Firstly, this study is very important to the organization to identify and understand the relationship between employees' proactive personality and their career self-management behaviors. Through this study, the organization can determine the degree of influence of employees' proactive personality on their career self-management behaviors. The organization also can understand the role of career resilience in the relationship between employees' proactive personality and their career self-management behaviors. This study can serves as a tool for the organization to understand more about the employees' career self-management behaviors and provide career counseling for those employees in managing their careers effectively.

Secondly, this study is important to the employees that work for the organization. This study will provide chance for them to understand more about their career self-management behaviors. Through this study, they will be more