



Brain Drain: Why are academics leaving? The Impact of Traditional Career Practices on Career Success in Academia

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - This paper investigates the relationship between traditional career practices and academicians' academic career success. **Design/methodology/approach** - The investigation employed a quantitative methodology, with simple random sampling for data collection. In this research, a total of 586 responses were analyzed. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) techniques with SmartPLS 4 were utilized to evaluate the hypotheses.

Findings - According to the study, traditional career practices do not affect the bioactive career success of academics. The results indicate that only the subjective career success of academics is positively and significantly affected by traditional career practices. In addition, the study found that traditional career practices have a negative but insignificant effect on salary increases. **Implications**:-The results of this study have significant implications for academics, universities, and policymakers as they explore alternative career practices that can better promote academic career success in the modern era. This research can aid academic researchers and practitioners in gaining a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to career success in academia and identifying strategies to retain and nurture academic talent. **Novelty**:- This research provides new insights on the impact of traditional career practices on academic career success in academia, using quantitative methodology and advanced statistical techniques. The finding that subjective career success is positively influenced by traditional career practices adds to existing literature and highlights the need for reevaluation of traditional career practices in academia.

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Introduction

Academic institutions play a crucial role in the progress and development of nations. It supports the advancement of knowledge, research, and innovation. Through education and research, the academic sector contributes to developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, which are indispensable for economic growth and social progress. Investing in education and training is a vital driver of economic growth and poverty reduction, according to a 2018 World Bank study. According to the study, education effectively boosts productivity, fosters innovation, and reduces inequality. In addition, the academic sector is essential for developing a well-educated and skilled labor force that can adapt to the shifting needs of the global economy (World Bank, 2018). In addition, the academic sector is essential for nurturing social and cultural development, as well as democratic values and civic participation (OECD, 2019a). The academic sector is essential for the sustainable development of nations and constitutes an integral part of any comprehensive national development strategy (OECD, 2019b).

In addition, the academic sector plays a significant role in fostering research and innovation, which are essential for economic development and competitiveness. According to a 2017 report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), research and development (R&D) investments are highly correlated with economic growth and productivity. In addition, the report found that countries with higher levels of R&D investment have higher levels of innovation and greater success in creating new products and services, which leads to increased competitiveness and economic growth. In addition, the academic sector plays a vital role in fostering cultural and social development. Through education, individuals acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to participate actively in society and make informed decisions. In addition, education fosters critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, which are crucial for fostering social and cultural development.

Maintaining academic talent is essential for the academic sector's prosperity. Unqualified educators can harm university education quality, research capacity, and program offerings. It can also make it difficult for universities to attract top talent and increase the burden on current faculty members, resulting in burnout and decreased productivity. Traditional career practices characterize Saudi university workplaces.

Traditional career practices, positively associated with career success, have been extensively discussed in the career development literature (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Ng & Feldman, 2008). These practices emphasize the significance of following a clear and structured career path within a single organization, where employees who demonstrate diligence, commitment, and loyalty are more likely to achieve career success. However, it is unknown to what extent traditional career practices apply to academic work environments, particularly in Saudi Arabia.

Recent rapid development in Saudi Arabia's higher education sector has led to an increase in the number of universities and the demand for faculty members. Therefore, universities must understand Saudi faculty members' career orientations and success factors to attract and retain exceptional individuals, ensure job satisfaction, and enhance academic performance (Kuwaiti, Bicak, & Wahass, 2020).

Saudi Arabia's academic workplace is distinctive due to cultural, social, and religious factors influencing career advancement and success. For example, traditional values such as loyalty and respect for authority may influence how faculty members view their career paths and organizational loyalty. In addition, the work-life balance of Saudi faculty members may differ due to the importance of family and cultural obligations in their personal and professional lives. In addition, universities may have trouble retaining their academic talent, as individuals prefer to depart for the private sector or modern government institutions, which offer more attractive benefits and career advancement opportunities. This trend is growing in popularity among academics pursuing career advancement and success.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between traditional career practices and career success among academic faculty members in Saudi Arabia. This study will investigate the impact of traditional career practices on academic success in Saudi Arabia. The findings of this study have significant ramifications for universities in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere that seek to recruit and retain academically competent faculty. By understanding the relationship between traditional career practices and career success, universities can develop strategies to support academics' career development and increase job satisfaction, ultimately contributing to improved academic outcomes.

Theoretical Background and Model Hypotheses

The psychological contract constitutes a perception of the implicit reciprocal obligations between an individual and an organization (Rousseau, 1995). The traditional psychological contract refers to the unwritten obligations and expectations between employees and organizations regarding employment security, benefits, and career advancement (Shore & Tetrick, 1994).

The origins of the concept of the psychological contract can be traced to social exchange theorists, who examined the exchange of resources between individuals (Blau, 1964). Argyris (1960) coined the term "psychological contract" and argued that individuals have expectations regarding the benefits and costs of their employment relationship. This concept gave rise to the traditional psychological contract, emphasizing the implicit expectations and obligations between employees and organizations (Rousseau, 1995).

It has been demonstrated that the traditional psychological contract has a significant impact on a variety of workplace outcomes. For instance, job satisfaction correlates positively with fulfilling the traditional psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995). Contrariwise, a transgression of the conventional psychological contract can result in employee turnover (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000). Additionally, a breach of the traditional psychological contract negatively influences the organization's credibility (Rousseau, 1995). Thus, traditional psychological contracts and traditional career practices are closely related.

As previously mentioned, the traditional psychological contract refers to employees' implicit expectations regarding their relationship with their employer, such as promises of employment security, career advancement, and mutual loyalty (Rousseau, 1995). On the other hand, traditional career practices are characterized by a linear, hierarchical, and stable career trajectory in which employees advance through an organization's ranks in a

predictable and structured manner (Arthur et al., 2005). Frequently, these practices are predicated on the traditional psychological contract assumptions of long-term employment and job security (Rousseau, 1995). Thus, there is a close relationship between the traditional psychological contract and traditional career practices, as both are based on the same assumptions regarding long-term employment and career advancement. However, as the nature of work has changed, these preconceptions have become increasingly obsolete, resulting in a mismatch between employee expectations and organizational practices (Hall & Moss, 1998). This has led to increased employee dissatisfaction, resulting in high turnover rates and many organizations' talent depletion (Ng & Feldman, 2008).

Traditional career orientation is a well-known approach to career development that emphasizes the significance of pursuing a structured career path within a single organization. According to this view, individuals who demonstrate diligence, commitment, and loyalty to their employer are more likely to achieve career success (Arthur et al., 2005). This strategy is predicated on the belief that career success is attained through a long-term commitment to an organization, consistent performance, and advancement through the ranks.

Traditional career practices are positively associated with career success, according to research. According to a study by Ng and Feldman (2008), employees with robust traditional career practices were more likely to achieve career success than those without. The study found that traditional career practices were positively associated with greater job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention to remain with the organization.

Another study by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) examined the correlation between traditional career practices and college student's success. According to the study, students with a strong traditional career orientation were more likely to choose occupations with long-term stability and opportunities for advancement. In addition, the study found that students who employed conventional career practices were more likely to experience greater career satisfaction and success.

In addition, research has demonstrated that traditional career practices are strongly associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work engagement (Zhou et al., 2022). Individuals who adhere to conventional career practices are more likely to be aware of their career objectives and motivated to achieve them. In addition, they are more likely to feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in their work and loyalty to their employer.

However, it is essential to note that traditional career practices may not be appropriate for all individuals or organizational contexts. Flexible and adaptable individuals may be more successful than those who rigorously adhere to a traditional career path in organizations that undergo rapid change or in which job roles and responsibilities are constantly evolving, for instance (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Additionally, some individuals may value work-life balance or job autonomy more than traditional career advancement (Hall & Chandler, 2005).

Traditional career paths may not be appropriate for individuals who prefer greater autonomy in their work or who place a premium on work-life balance. According to several studies, employees who value autonomy and adaptability may benefit from alternative career paths that permit greater job customization and self-directed career development

(Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). This strategy may include employment rotations, cross-functional collaborations, and opportunities for skill development that allow individuals to pursue their career objectives and interests within the organization.

Similarly, work-life balance has gained prominence in recent years, especially among younger generations of employees. Some studies suggest that alternative career paths that prioritize work-life balance may assist in attracting and retaining talented workers who prefer more flexible working arrangements (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Indeed, academic work and life interference are very high (Baruch & Hall, 2004).

In addition, the rapidly altering nature of work and organizational contexts may present obstacles to conventional career trajectories. In organizations undergoing significant change or disruption, for instance, flexible and adaptable individuals may be better able to navigate uncertainty and capitalize on emerging opportunities (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). This may necessitate the development of a variety of skills and competencies, including problem-solving, adaptability, and collaboration, which enable individuals to flourish in dynamic environments.

In general, the limitations of traditional career practices underscore the need for alternative approaches that are more aligned with the requirements and objectives of diverse academics and universities. Universities may attract and retain talented academics by adopting more flexible and adaptable career practices while allowing academics to pursue their career goals and interests.

Recent study investigated the relationship between job crafting, the process by which individuals proactively shape their work tasks and relationships to align with their preferences and strengths, and career success. Those who engaged in job crafting reported tremendous career success, including job satisfaction, job performance, and career development, than those who did not (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2013).

Additionally, the study found that job crafting was positively associated with career adaptability, or the capacity to adapt to altering work environments and demands. According to these findings, individuals who take a proactive approach to shaping their work experiences may be better equipped to navigate career challenges and achieve success.

Traditional career orientation refers to an individual's focus on upward mobility and status attainment in their career. In other words, career-oriented individuals are more likely to prioritize their career advancement and pay increases over other aspects of their jobs. In the context of Saudi universities, conventional career orientation may not be a reliable predictor of salary increase. Academic institutions in Saudi Arabia have a rigid pay structure that is not significantly influenced by performance or career progression.

Prior research has examined the correlation between career orientation and salary increase. For instance, Anderson and Schalk (1998) discovered that traditional career orientation was positively associated with salary increases in the United States. However, the relationship between career orientation and salary increase may vary by culture and context. Reviewing the differences in findings in previous studies suggest that the association between traditional career orientation and pay increase may not be universal and may depend on cultural and contextual factors. Accordingly, the study hypothesizes:

H1: *In the academic work environment in Saudi universities, there is no relationship between traditional career practices and pay rise.*

Promotion is an increase in employment level and responsibilities within an organization. Traditional career-oriented individuals may not be more likely to receive promotions in Saudi universities than non-career-oriented individuals.

Prior research has investigated the connection between career orientation and promotion. In the United States, for instance, Ng and Feldman (2008) found that individuals focused on their careers were more likely to be promoted. As with H1, the relationship between career orientation and promotion may vary across cultures and contexts. According to a study conducted in Turkey by Aycan et al. (2000), there is no correlation between career orientation and promotion. These results suggest that the relationship between career orientation and advancement may not be universal and may be contingent on cultural and contextual factors. Due to the prevalence of traditional psychological contract practices in Saudi university workplaces, this is the case.

Similarly, government legislation restricts promotion flexibility, unlike the private sector, which enjoys substantial autonomy and flexibility. In Saudi Arabia, promotions in academic institutions are founded solely on seniority and not merit. Accordingly, the study hypothesizes

H2: *In the academic work environment in Saudi universities, there is no relationship between traditional career practices and promotion.*

Additionally, career satisfaction refers to an individual's job and career satisfaction. In Saudi universities, traditionally career-oriented individuals may not be more contented with their careers than those who are not.

The relationship between career orientation and career satisfaction has been studied in prior research. For instance, Cable and DeRue (2002) found that in the United States, career-oriented individuals are more content with their careers. As with previous hypotheses, however, the relationship between career orientation and career satisfaction may differ across cultures and contexts. The literature indicate that the relationship between career orientation and individual outcome (such as career satisfaction) may not be universal and may be contingent on cultural and contextual factors (Baruch & Quick, 2007). Academic personnel in Saudi universities may dissatisfied with their careers, regardless of their adherence to conventional career practices. As discussed previously, a work environment dominated by traditional career advancement practices may not contribute to academic satisfaction because it requires more significant effort and a longer time commitment to attain success. Accordingly, the study hypothesizes:

H3: *In the academic work environment in Saudi universities, there is no relationship between traditional career practices and career satisfaction.*

Figure 1. presents the hypothesis model and relationships between the variables of the study.

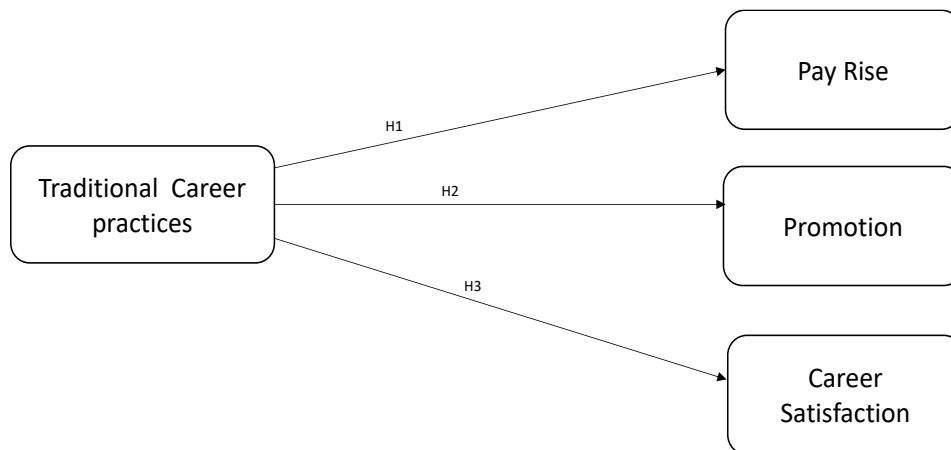


Figure 1: Hypothesis Model

Methods

Sample and procedure

This quantitative study used a cross-sectional survey to acquire data to examine the relationship between academics' traditional career outlooks and career success. The research sample consisted of academics from Saudi universities using back translation to translate the questionnaire from English to Arabic (Brislin, 1970). Each participant's consent was obtained with knowledge of the risks involved. Depending on the participant's inclination, the questionnaires were administered electronically or on paper and pencil. The duration of the entire procedure was approximately 9 minutes. Participants' confidentiality was maintained throughout the study, and data were stored securely to protect their privacy.

A pilot investigation with 53 participants was conducted as part of the study. Several ambiguous queries were identified, and the necessary modifications were made. The revised version was evaluated using a fresh sample.

With the human resource officer, the necessary arrangements have been made in advance, and the significance of the study has been explained. Consequently, a total of 586 completed questionnaires were collected (n=586).

As J. S. Armstrong and Overton recommended, we compared early and late participants to resolve the issue of non-response bias (1977). The absence of a statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$) suggests that non-response bias is not an issue in this study.

Measures

The study examined the effect of traditional career attitudes on academicians' career success. All measurement items used in the current investigation were derived from previous research, including studies conducted in the Middle East. These items were modified to suit the current study context (e.g., "Company" was changed to "university") and evaluated by Arabic- and English-speaking HRM experts to ensure their content

validity. Four items from Baruch and Quick were chosen to measure traditional career attitudes (2007). On a seven-point Likert scale, participants were asked to rate their agreement with each item (1 = vehemently disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Example: "Career success for me means having job security within the same organization" The average of the four items was used to create a singular scale score (alpha 0.76).

This investigation used objective and subjective career outcomes to evaluate career success. Objective career success includes compensation and promotions, while subjective career success is measured by job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2003). This study considered career success's objective and subjective dimensions, as both are essential indicators of an individual's career success. The absence of one of these dimensions may negatively affect an individual's perception of career success.

Two factors—salary and promotion—were used to determine objective career success. Respondents were asked to calculate a standard salary increase using Z scores for their current and previous monthly salaries (bonuses and other direct income included). Promotions were determined by asking respondents to report the number of promotions they received since employment, including administrative advancements. According to Seibert and Kraimer (2001), promotion refers to any level or a substantial increase in job responsibilities or scope.

Using a five-item scale created by Greenhaus et al., subjective career success was measured (1990). On a seven-point Likert scale, participants were asked to rate their agreement with each item (1 = vehemently disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Example: "I am pleased with my progress toward achieving my overall career objectives." The average of the five items was then used to create a singular scale score with an alpha of 0.90.

Analytical procedure

The researchers analyzed descriptive data using IBM SPSS version 24 and Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) techniques using SmartPLS 4. SEM was selected as the primary analysis method due to its ability to examine multiple interrelated variables in a complex research model with a large sample size of 586 participants. The PLS-SEM process was divided into two parts: first, the researcher tested the measurement model, and then they tested the proposed relationships in the structural model. The significance level was set at $p < .05$ for all analyses.

Results

Demographic and Descriptive Statistics

The average age of the survey participants was between 41 to 50 years old. Of the 586 participants, 405 (69.5%) were male academics, and 181 (30.9%) were female. The majority of the participants, 527 (89.9%), were married, with 17 (2.9%) being divorced and 37 (6.3%) being single. Of the participants, 372 (63.5%) were from Saudi Arabia, while 181 (30.9%) were from other Arab countries.

In terms of academic status, 300 (51.2%) were assistant professors, 142 (24.2%) were associate professors, and 144 (24.6%) were professors. The participants had varying levels of work experience, with the largest group (27.5%, 161 participants) having 11-20 years in academia, followed by 137 (23.4%) with 6-10 years, 136 (23.2%) with 1-5 years, and 130 (22.2%) with over 20 years of experience. The smallest group, with less than a year of work experience, comprised 22 participants (3.8%).

Regarding education, 401 participants (68.4%) obtained their Ph.D. from countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, or the USA, while 185 (31.6%) mostly obtained their degrees from Middle Eastern and European countries. Regarding contract type, 367 participants (62.6%) had permanent contracts, while 219 (37.4%) had fixed-term contracts.

Evaluation of the Outer Measurement Model

Table 1 reports Cronbach α 's (all higher than 0.70) along with the correlations among study variables and the square root of the AVE for each construct measured in the Likert scale (italic formatted numbers). All the correlations among constructs were below the recommended value of 0.85, which supports discriminant validity for the study constructs.

Following the recommendations of Hair et al. (2019), and Kline, several statistics were used to assess the accuracy and reliability of the outer model of this study (2015). These statistics included "convergent validity" (CV), "convergent reliability" (CR), "internal consistency reliability" (Cronbach's alpha), and "discriminant validity." Internal reliability was satisfactory, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.90 and 0.76 and composite reliability values of 0.92 for both constructs (as seen in Table 1). Moreover, the "Standardized Factor Loading" values were more significant than 0.70, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability, except for one item (TCA4) that was less than 0.70 and was therefore excluded from the analysis. The convergent validity was assured by ensuring that the "Average Variance Extracted" values were more significant than 0.5, the minimum acceptable level.

Table 1

Evaluation of the Outer Measurement Model and VIF for multicollinearity.

Construct		Standardized Loading	VIF	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Traditional Career Practices (TCP)	TCP1	0.78	1.48	0.56	0.92	0.76
	TCP2	0.74	1.78			
	TCP3	0.88	1.76			
	TCP4	0.53	1.28			
Career Satisfaction (CS)	CS1	0.87	3.18	0.72	0.92	0.90
	CS2	0.91	3.92			
	CS3	0.73	1.75			
	CS4	0.89	3.30			
	CS5	0.82	2.35			

Table 2

Cross-loading for study factors

	Career Satisfaction	Traditional Career Practices
CS1	0.875	0.157
CS2	0.912	0.150
CS3	0.731	0.097
CS4	0.897	0.136
CS5	0.826	0.120
TCP1	0.135	0.789
TCP2	0.062	0.744
TCP3	0.157	0.889
TCP4	0.032	0.537

Table 3*Fornell-Larker Criterion and HTMT results*

	Fornell-Larcker Criterion		HTMT Results	
	CS	TCP	CS	TCP
Career Satisfaction	0.850			0.153
Traditional Career Practices	0.158	0.751	0.153	

Table 4*Coefficient of determination (R2) and (Q2) and model fit (SRMR-NFI).*

Dependent variables	(R2)	(Q2)
Pay Rise	0.022	0.854
Promotion	0.002	0.828
Career Satisfaction	0.003	0.760
Model Fit indices	SRMR	NFI
	0.046	0.90

As suggested by Leguina, three criteria were used to corroborate that the scale has adequate discriminant validity (2015). These included the crossloading matrix, the Fornell-Larcker criterion method, and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). Table 2 demonstrates that the outer loading of each latent variable was more significant than its cross-loading. In addition, as shown in Table 3, the diagonal AVE values were more significant than the inter-variable correlation coefficient, indicating high discriminant validity. Leguina said the HTMT values were 0.15, substantially lower than the reference value (2015).

These results support the scale's reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity, as endorsed by the study's outer measurement model. Therefore, the outer structural model can be utilized to verify the hypotheses.

Evaluation of the Internal Structural Model The research used structural equation analysis to test its hypotheses and determine whether the proposed model accurately explained and predicted changes in dependent variables caused by independent variables. Table 4 contains the R2 values for the dependent variables "Pay Increase," "Promotion," and "Career Satisfaction," with respective values of 0.022, 0.002, and 0.003. The Stone-Geisser Q2 calculation was also performed for each dependent variable, and the values for "Pay Rise," "Promotion," and "Career Satisfaction" were all greater than zero: 0.854, 0.828, and 0.760, respectively. Moreover, the SRMR value was 0.047, and the NFI value was 0.90, both exceeding the threshold values, indicating that the model fit the data well.

The research utilized the innovative PLS4 method with bootstrapping to determine the path coefficients and t-values for direct and mediating relationships between the study's independent and dependent variables. Three hypotheses were tested. The results indicated that the traditional career practices had no effects on academic objective career success, including pay rise and promotion ($\beta = -0.049$, $p > 0.05$, $\beta = 0.053$, $p < 0.05$), which supports hypotheses H1 and H2. The study found that traditional career practices only affected career satisfaction ($\beta = 0.150$, $p < 0.05$), rejecting hypothesis H3.

The study revealed that traditional career practices were not associated with objective career success, but only with subjective career success. Therefore, the study emphasizes the importance of incorporating contemporary career practices when examining the factors influencing academic career success. Figure 2 depicts the study's results structure and measurement paradigm.

Table 5

Study Tested Hypotheses

	Study Tested Hypotheses	Beta (β)	t-values	p Values	Results
H1	Traditional career practices -> pay rise	-0.049	0.974	0.330	Supported
H2	Traditional career practices -> promotion	0.053	1.175	0.240	Supported
H3	Traditional career practices -> Career Satisfaction	0.150	3.226	0.001	rejected

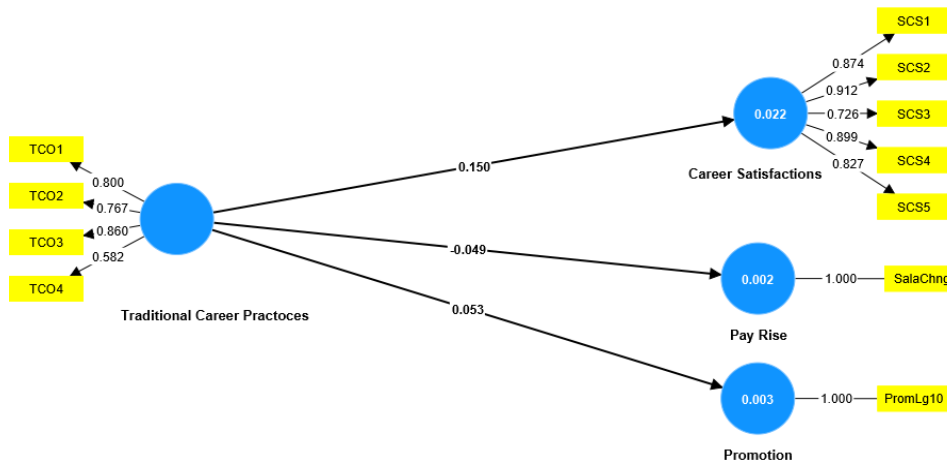


Figure 2: Structural and Measurement Model.

Discussion

This study sought to investigate the direct effects of traditional career practices on academics' objective and subjective career success in Saudi university work environments. The study aimed to determine whether the traditional career practices prevalent in university work environments contribute to academics abandoning universities for more flexible work environments and more significant opportunities for career advancement

There was no significant correlation between traditional career practices and pay raises or promotions, suggesting that traditional career practices may not effectively promote objective career success in academia. The study found, however, that traditional career practices have a positive effect on academics' career satisfaction, suggesting that traditional career practices play a role in influencing academics' subjective career success. This result is consistent with prior research emphasizing the significance of contemporary career practices when come to academic sector (e.g., Baruch and Hall (2004)). Furthermore, the non-significant negative relationship between traditional career practices and pay raise suggests that other factors, such as research productivity or external funding, may influence academic pay more (Meneses & Moreno, 2019).

This study's findings contribute to the ongoing discussion regarding traditional academic career practices. The findings support previous research indicating that traditional career practices may not effectively promote career success (Farroukh, 2022). However, the study also provides new insights into the positive impact of traditional career practices on personal career success. It highlights the complexity of the relationship between career practices and academic career outcomes. Traditionally, traditional career practices were regarded as acceptable in the academic sector due to the higher salaries offered to university faculty members than in the private sector. Due to the government's efforts to diversify the economy and reduce reliance on oil revenues, the private sector has emerged as a more viable option for career advancement and success in light of the Saudi Vision 2030 (Kumar, Haque, & Venugopal, 2019).

In contrast to the university sector, where career advancement and success depend primarily on seniority and adherence to the traditional psychological contract, the private sector rewards performance, networking, and job mobility (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). The traditional psychological contract refers to the implicit obligations and expectations regarding mutual trust, loyalty, and job security between employees and employers (Rousseau, 1995). This contract may no longer apply in the private sector, where job security is contingent on individual contributions and market demands.

In addition, the government's regulations and bureaucratic procedures can restrict universities' recruitment, retention, and promotion flexibility (Almalki, FitzGerald, & Clark, 2011). Therefore, academicians seeking greater autonomy and recognition may find the private sector more attractive, providing a more dynamic and competitive environment (Kuwaiti et al., 2020). This could be one of the reasons professors leave universities.

The finding that traditional career practices have a negative but not statistically significant effect on pay raises is an intriguing result that suggests that other factors may play a more significant role in determining pay in academia. Samaniego et al. (2023) indicated that research output and external funding were the most influential factors in determining compensation in the United States. These findings suggest that alternative career practices should be considered to better support academicians' career success in today's globalized academic environment. Traditional career practices may influence academics' perceptions of their careers, but they may not be effective in fostering objective academic career success. As suggested by Shen et al. (2022) alternative career practices such as mentoring and networking may be more effective in promoting objective career success in the academic context. These findings are essential for academics, universities, and policymakers as they investigate alternative career practices that can better support the career success of academics in the 21st century. This research can assist academic researchers and practitioners in gaining a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to academic career success and identify strategies for retaining academic talent.

Limitations and future studies

The limitations of this investigation must be considered when interpreting the results. First, the study was limited to a particular context (universities in Saudi Arabia), which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should examine the relationship between traditional career practices and career success in various contexts to determine the generalizability of the findings.

The second limitation is that the study relied on self-reported measures, which are susceptible to bias. To validate the findings, future research should utilize objective measures of career achievement, such as citations, grants, and awards. Thirdly, the study examined only the direct effects of traditional career practices on career success; future research could investigate the mediating and moderating effects of other variables, such as gender, age, and job satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the need to reevaluate traditional academic career practices. These practices may have a positive influence on subjective career success, but they may not be effective at promoting objective career success. The study emphasizes the complexity of the relationship between career practices and outcomes. It suggests that alternative career practices, such as mentoring, flexible job mobility, and networking, may be more effective at fostering objective career success. The findings have important implications for universities, policymakers, and academics as they investigate alternative career practices that can better facilitate career advancement and success in the twenty-first century. Traditional career practices may not be effective in promoting objective career success, but they may positively impact subjective career success, according to the research.

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