

# The Relationship between Innovative Work Behaviors and Subjective Career Success among Employees in Selected Private Organisation

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**Abstract:** *Innovations are crucial factors in enabling organisations to effectively adapt to rapid changes in the working environment and to gain a competitive advantage. Employee's career success increases when they are applying innovative work behaviors. This study attempts to examine the relationship between innovative work behaviors (opportunity exploration, idea generation, idea promotion, idea realisation & reflection) and subjective career success among employees in selected private organisations at Kuching, Sarawak. A quantitative research design was utilized for this study. Data were collected by simple random sampling with 123 completed questionnaire were successively collected. The findings of this study were analysed using Pearson Correlation Analysis and Multiple Linear Regression (Stepwise). Results revealed that there are statistically significant relationship between (opportunity exploration, idea generation, idea promotion, idea realisation & reflection) and subjective career success. Furthermore, result show that idea realization is the highest significant predictor towards subjective career success. The findings of this study provide significant information for HRD practitioners emphasise to establish an environment that support innovation in order to make the greater experience of subjective career success.*

**Keywords :** *Innovative Work Behaviors, Subjective Career Success, Private Organisation*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Today, innovations are crucial factor in enabling organisations to effectively adapt to rapid changes in working environment and to gain a competitive advantage. Innovations are referred to novel and potentially useful

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products or processes that are developed to address problems or improve the status quo of a particular work context. This includes rethinking and changing underlying principles of organisational work. Organisations are facing greater demand to engage in innovative work behaviors in order to sustain competitive and lead the change process itself [1].

Since organisations rely so much mainly on employees to innovate their processes, methods and operations, the contribution toward innovative development are necessary and expected from employees. Employee's contributions towards innovative development are referred as innovative work behaviors (IWB) which encompasses all work activities carried out in relation to the development of innovations [2]. Scholars also proposed that innovative work behaviors (IWB) were form from five interrelated sets of behavioral activities namely opportunity exploration, idea generation, idea promotion, idea realization and reflection. According to Dy Bunpin et al. [3], when employees engaged in innovative work behaviors, they can adopt positive attitudes and respond appropriately to collaborators, customers and managers. Hence, the necessity for organisations to nurture innovative mindsets among employees to deliver more value creation is crucial in order to sustain longer-term survival and success [4].

Prior study suggested that future researchers should test whether innovative work behaviors will influence career success [5]. Career success is defined as, "positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievement one has accumulated as a result of one's work experiences" [3]. Although the study of career success has progressed significantly, most of career success research has been conducted mainly focusing in overseas region [6] - [12].

From the Malaysian perspectives, past studies on career success have mostly been associated with women and academicians [13] - [15]. There is a limited study focuses on the relationship between innovative work behaviors and subjective career success. As postulated by Dailey, Morris & Hoge [16], employee's career success increase when they are applying innovative work behaviors. Hence, it is important for organisations and human resource development (HRD) practitioners to study the linkages between innovative work behaviors and career success.

### A. Problem Statement

Social Cognitive Career Theory proposed that individuals exercise personal agency in their career development are conceived as a function of an individual's self-efficacy, outcome expectations, goals, and

support or barriers in the environment [17]. Accordingly, in order to further support the nature of SCCT, Smale et al. [5] suggested that future research should focus on the other individual factors (personal agency) with the career development concept in the theory. Therefore, the study intended to extend SCCT in a comprehensive manner by exploring how contextual factors (innovative work behavior) interface with person inputs (such as predispositions) to shape the career success of private organisation's employees.

There are several empirical gaps that have been identified related to the present study. First, there has been an increasing amount of literatures focusing on innovative work behaviors in banking sector [18], government sector [19], and automotive sector [20]. Therefore, to address this gap the present study focuses on private construction company. Second, most of past studies related to career success focuses on the linkages between both dimensions of career success which are known as objective and subjective career success [21], [22].

Smale, et.al [5] indicate that individual factors also contributed to career success. Hence, the present study attempts to study the relationships between individual factor (innovative work behaviors) and subjective career success only. Finally, most of past innovative work behaviors studies focused on nurses [23], teachers [24] and vocational teachers [25]. Hence, the present study will extend to construction workers.

In social perspective, the symbolic meaning of innovative work behavior and how it has given impact on individual's image have been highlighted. The reasons why individuals engage in innovative behavior activities are either these activities will enhance their expected positive image within organisation or they avoid innovative behavior activities if these activities do not conform to organisation or group norms [26]. Besides that, since innovation is a risky behavior and no guarantee of success, the future consequences maybe detrimental to individual's image. Thus, it is important for this current study to enlighten that innovative work behaviors can positively influence individual's career success in such ways.

Furthermore, in the country context, it also interesting that Malaysia has transformed itself from a traditional agricultural economy to becoming an export-driven one which is characterized by high technology, knowledge-based and capital-intensive industries [27]. Malaysia has an interesting and fusion culture which represents a mixture of Malay, Chinese, Indian and other indigenous ethnicities. Therefore, there is a need to understand more about the cross-cultural dimension. Research conducted on German employees may not generalize to other populations with distinct national cultural contexts. Hence, the current study is relevance to extend the context of cross-cultural dimension within Malaysia context. Significantly, Dyke and Duxbury [10] conducted a study on subjective career success by measuring fulfilling work, financial rewards, recognition and authority but did not integrate other factors that would potentially provide more robust explanation of career success. Hence, the current study will focus on more selected predictors such as performance, advancement, self-development, financial security, job security, satisfaction, recognition, creativity, cooperation and contribution as well.

In a recent qualitative study conducted by Dries, Pepermans, and Carlier [28], a multidimensional framework of the criteria for career success was elicited based on the interviews among 22 managers from 5 Belgian organisations. These dimensions of subjective career success include performance, advancement, self-development, creativity, security, satisfaction, recognition, cooperation, and contribution. This study provides important evidence on the multiple components of career success. Therefore, researchers need more quantitative data on issue to examine the relationship of innovative work behavior and subjective career success.

## B. Hypothesis

Ha1: There is a significant relationship between opportunity exploration and subjective career success

Ha2: There is a relationship between on idea generation and subjective career success

Ha3: There is a relationship between idea promotion and subjective career success

Ha4: There is a relationship between idea realization and subjective career success

Ha5: There is a relationship between reflection and their subjective career success

Ha6: Innovative work behavior (opportunity exploration, idea generation, idea promotion, idea realisation & reflection) influence subjective career success

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Career Success

Social Cognitive Career Theory developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett in 1994 [29], encourages scholars to understand about how three interrelated aspects of career development: (1) how basic academic and career interests develop, (2) how educational and career choices are made, and (3) how academic and career success obtained. The theory found that a variety of concepts such as interests, abilities, values and environmental factors have affected career development.

According to Lent and Brown [30], SCCT was originally developed to address the role of background variables, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations in the development of vocational interest, career choice and work performance, as illustrated in [29, Fig .1]. Self-efficacy is about individual's personal belief on their capabilities to perform the actual behaviors. SCCT assumes that when people have the required skills and environmental support to pursue the activities, they are likely to become interested in, choose to follow and perform better in activities because they have strong of self-efficacy beliefs. Outcomes expectations are about the consequences of doing such particular behaviors or actions.

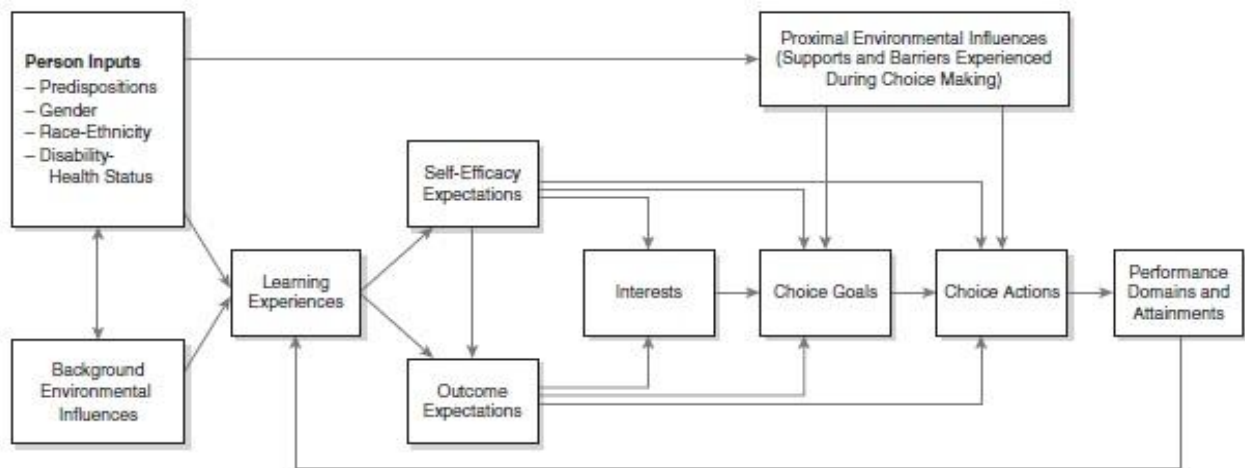


Fig 1: Development of career-related interest and choice based on Social Cognitive Career Theory. [29]

Personal goals refer to as people intentions to attain a certain level of performance or engage in certain activity.

SCCT represents a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding vocational interest formation, career aspirations and choice behaviors, and career performance attainments. The central to SCCT is the assumption that two social cognitive mechanisms (self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations) figure prominently in interest formation and other important career outcomes. SCCT further posits that person inputs (predispositions) and background contextual affordances contribute to career-relevant learning experiences (performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states), which are considered experiential sources of corresponding self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations. Given that career success represents subsequent performance attainments, it can be understood in terms of SCCT, wherein career success would be affected by contextual influences for example in this study (subjective career success) through person inputs (innovative work behaviors).

Career success is a significant concept that helps to ensure individual's job satisfaction and their general well-being. Since the employee's success can be transferred translated? at the organisational level, it is also a critical concept for organisation as well [31]. Career success referred to "perceived or actual accomplishments that individuals have accumulated as a result of their employment" [32]. Career success is divided into two perspectives; objective and subjective. In earlier studies on career success, the focus was often on progression or advancement such as hierarchical status, in relation to salary and rate of promotion [33].

However, recent studies determined suggest? that the key success of the individual must be linked to the subjective standard such as working atmosphere among colleagues or job satisfaction [34]. Subjective career success represents individual feelings (self-evaluation) of accomplishment and satisfaction with their career [10]. Employees are more likely to report positive attitudes towards their work and their organisation when there is a fit between their definition of subjective career success and their career achievements [35]. The scholars suggested that by identifying ways to enhance

employee subjective success experiences will help to enhance job satisfaction, commitment, and intention to stay at the organisation. It was included perceptions of intrinsic and extrinsic success through consideration of such matters as perceived personal progress, aspirations and comparisons in relation to colleague's advancement within organisation. With technological advances and globalization in today's working environment, career paths for individuals are less likely to have prescribed by the organisations [36]. Moreover, employees are likely to work for multiple organisations, managing and shaping their own careers in order to gain satisfaction and feeling engaged in meaningful work,[28]. rapidly changing of employment context does impact people's understanding of career development and career success Zhou et.al [37]. For example, due to downsizing of organisations some people are laid off and have to make next plan to do in their careers and some people have the flexibility to work on projects with multiple organisations. This is supported by Dries, Pepermans, and Carlier [28], people are likely becoming more boundaryless which means that career path are grow through project-based competency development but not bounded within specific organisations. The changing employment patterns makes people more concerned with the fulfilment of their own needs rather than organisational goals.

### B. Innovative Work Behaviors (IWB)

Previous studies mentioned that innovative work behaviors contribute to positive outcomes, such as meaningful work and job autonomy [38], self-efficacy [39], work role performance [20], and psychological contract, job design and organisational justice [1]. A study by Cai et al. [38] indicates that employees' perceptions of meaningful work mediate the relationship between servant leaders and IWB. This mediating relationship is conditional on the moderating role of job autonomy in the path from servant leadership to meaningful work. The indirect effect of servant leadership on employee IWB via meaningful work exists only when job autonomy is high.

In addition, a study by Ng and Lucianetti [39] indicated that self-efficacy has a significant

relationship with individual innovative behaviors and mediates the relationships to explain why employees have a strong motivation that can accomplish tasks through their innovative endeavors. A study conducted in Tianjin, China among 848 of employees revealed that high innovative behavior, self-efficacy and colleague solidarity can improve career success [23]. The results demonstrate the innovative behavior had a positive effect on career success through self-efficacy. Results indicated employees with high self-confidence and self-worth, they are likely to achieve successful outcomes when they have innovation awareness and implemented it in their workplace. Messman and Mulder [2], provided the solid evidence for reliability and validity of the developed instrument for innovation work behavior. In addition, the findings show that employees tend to engage in IWB since they expect positive image gains. Furthermore, the willingness to engage in IWB depends on individual preferences Sulistiawan et al. [40].

### III. METHODOLOGY/MATERIALS

This study utilised a quantitative approach and used simple random sampling for its data collection. The population of this study comprises with 180 of employees working in private construction organisation at Kuching, Sarawak. Based on formula by Krejcie and Morgan [41], 123 of sample size are required for a population of 180 of employees. Innovative work behaviors (Opportunity exploration, idea generation, idea promotion, idea realization, reflection) was measured using items-scale developed by Messmann and Mulder [2]. Also, Subjective Career Success (performance, advancement, self-development, creativity, financial security, job security, satisfaction, recognition, cooperation, contribution) was adopted from Dries, Pepermans, and Carlier [28].

### IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

**Hypothesis 1:** There is significant relationship between *opportunity exploration and subjective career success*

Table 1 revealed that there was a significant relationship between opportunity exploration and subjective career success,  $r(123) = .559, p < .05$ . Therefore, Ha1 is accepted. Being given opportunity to explore as the chance to learn new skills, growth and advancement does significantly have relationship with subjective career success [23]. This is due to once the employees have resources and power to accomplish their tasks, they can be stimulated and motivated to perform very well and better which will improve their performance. Increases of knowledge and skills in a job increase the innovative work behaviors too. Opportunity exploration allows employees to learn new advance way to perform their task and it will lead to organizational production and effectiveness. Employees in this organisation believe that only by keeping themselves well-informed and updated with the latest development in organisation will increase their subjective career success.

**Table 1: Innovative Work Behavior (Opportunity exploration, idea generation, idea realization & reflection) and Subjective Career Success**

Variables	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Opportunity Exploration	.559	.000
Idea Generation	.568	.000
Idea Promotion	.617	.000
Idea Realization	.664	.000
Reflection	.650	.000

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a significant relationship between *idea generation and subjective career success*

Based on Table 1, results show there was a significant relationship between idea generation and subjective career success,  $r(123) = 0.568, p < 0.05$ . Therefore, Ha2 is accepted. The result was consistent with the previous finding [20], which claimed that when employees help to generate ideas and support, it will enhance employee's personal performance. Employees try to recognize and understand work related problems by provide the meaningful ideas to solve the problems. It can be understood that, the more likely employees generating the creative ideas, the greater subjective career success they perceived.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is a significant relationship between *idea promotion and subjective career success*

Table 1 indicated that there was a significant relationship between idea promotion and subjective career success,  $r(123) = 0.617, p < 0.05$ . Therefore, Ha3 is accepted. The result was consistent with the suggestion by Parker, Williams and Turner [42], which indicated that individuals who are willing and able to innovate, will extend their contribution beyond the scope of their job requirements. Innovative employees feel a strong personal commitment to particular ideas, and they are someone in an informal role that pushes a creative idea beyond the roadblock within the organisation. Employees choose to innovate because they believe that by contributing to others will lead to subjective career success.

**Hypothesis 4:** There is a significant relationship between *idea realization and subjective career success*

There was a significant relationship between idea realization and subjective career success,  $r(123) = 0.664, p < .05$ . Therefore, Ha4 is accepted. The result of the finding was consistent with a study by De Jong and Hartog [43], which examined idea realization could enhance employee's self-development. When employees engaged in idea realization, they are likely to benefits organisation, team and individual as well. Since organisation involves trial and



errors, success and failure, idea realization provides employees to try out the ideas into practices even though they will face the failure. From the failure experience, it will allow employees to keep improving themselves by learning and develop be better in future

**Hypothesis 5:** There is a significant relationship between reflection and subjective career success

There was a significant relationship between reflection and subjective career success,  $r(123) = .650, p < .05$ . Therefore, Ha5 is accepted. The result was consistent with the previous studies [44], [45], which found that reflecting on ideas, strategies, activities and outcomes contributes to the entire process of innovation development as well as employee's professional performance. When employees reflecting the outcomes at present activities, they are able to enhance their knowledge and skills for comparable future activities. The ability to complete task will giving them satisfaction towards employees and their good work will get the great recognition from others. Therefore, by doing reflection on what they do, it will impact positively on their subjective career success.

**Hypothesis 6:** The best dominant predictor(s) that influence subject career success

**Table 2: Result of Multi-Linear Regression (stepwise) between Innovative work behaviors and Subjective Career Success**

Variables	b	Beta	t	p
Constant	0.937			
Idea Realization	0.304	0.350	3.320	0.001
Opportunity Exploration	0.221	0.232	2.939	0.004
Reflection	0.257	0.240	2.211	0.029
$F = 42.654$		$R = 0.720$		
$\text{Sig-}F = 0.000$		$R^2 = 0.518$		

In order to find the best predictor that influence subjective career success, multiple linear regression test (Stepwise) have been utilized. The result from Table 2 shows that there are three predictors of "DV" were significant and a good fit with  $F(3,119) = 42.654, p = 0.000$ . The  $R^2 = 0.518$  indicated that 51.8% of the variation "subjective career success" is explained by the idea realization (IR), reflection (RE), and opportunity exploration (OE) predictors. Results indicate that idea realization is the highest significant predictor contributed to subjective career success follow by reflection and opportunity exploration. Throughout the reflection process, it is allows employees to learn from the past experience and improve it to accomplish future tasks [2]. Thus, it is important for organisation to give more attention to the above selected predictor in designing innovative work behaviors strategy in order to increase employee's subjective career success.

## V. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for future practice. The measurement instruments used in this study can be used by managers, supervisors and HRD practitioners to recognize and assess innovative work behaviors among employees. For instance, the measurements can help assist in employee's selection processes as well as for organisational evaluation purposes [2]. Furthermore, a measure of innovative work behaviors can be used to identify innovative employees, to understand how and when employees are innovative, ways to give them supportive feedback on their ideas and ultimately, foster the innovation development itself.

This study provides suggestion to the practitioners to provide an environment that support innovation in order to enable employees generating and apply innovative ideas and methods to practice. Such support will enhance employee's motivation and engage them in the organisation.

### Limitation

The study of innovative work behaviors in this paper was limited only to opportunity exploration, idea generation, idea promotion, idea realization and reflection. Thus, other dimensions of innovative work were not being explored.

### Future Research

Based on this study, several suggestions were being provided for future researchers. A comparative study can be performed across different industries and areas of work. It would be interesting to compare the findings across different occupations. A qualitative study should be conducted to provide qualitative aspects of human perception and the questionnaire items should be translated using bilingual language to minimize the culture variation issue.

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## AUTHORS PROFILE



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**Rekaya Vincent Balang** is a Senior Lecturer at Department of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, UNIMAS. He is also a registered nurse with the Malaysian Nursing Board since 2001. He obtained his BSc (Hons.) in Nursing from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). He holds a Master of Nursing from University of South Australia and a PhD, focusing on nursing practice and professionalism, from University of Huddersfield, UK. He also holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning from UNIMAS. He started his career as a staff nurse in various settings such as Trauma OT and Mental Health. His research interests are nursing practice and issues, professionalism in nursing, nursing education and research, mental health, medical surgical and other pertinent health sciences. He has presented and published papers locally and internationally.