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Organizational and Individual Determinants of Success

by

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ORGANIZATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL DETERMINANTS OF CAREER SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT

This paper identified the factors that affect objective and subjective measures of career success. Objective measures included total compensation and rank level from the company president. Subjective measure was career satisfaction. The sample consisted of students in the MBA program of the University of the Philippines.

Both organizational and individual factors influence career success. However, the different measures of career success have different determinants, and these three measures of career success are not correlated.

One consistent finding in studies on career success using Philippine sample is that gender did not explain variation in total compensation, number of levels from company president, and career satisfaction. These null results have several implications. First, there exist income and status parity between female and male MBA students. Second, it challenges the generalizability of findings on gender differential in income, status, and career satisfaction common in studies based on samples from the United States and Europe.

Keywords: determinants of career success, objective career success, subjective career success

INTRODUCTION

A career is a sequence of jobs an individual holds during one’s work history (Feldman, 1996). While success in one’s career is a natural expectation of individuals, the nature of that success depends on what one expects from it. Indeed individuals have different definitions of career success based on their assessment of their career prospects (Ebadan & Winstanley, 1997).

Career success includes both the psychological and work-related outcomes from work role changes (London & Stumpf, 1982). Thus career success has been operationalized by objective and subjective measures.

Objective measures of career success pertain to those that can be observed and verified by others (Judge et al., 1995). Several researchers have studied career success using objective measures such as total compensation (Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1987; Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001; Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991; Whitely & Coetsier, 1993; Kirchmeyer, 1998), number of promotions (Wayne et al., 1999; Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991; Whitely & Coetsier, 1993), current pay grade (Daley, 1996), and size of most recent merit increase (Lobel & St. Clair, 1992).

Subjective measures of career success (Judge et al., 1995) pertain to the individuals’ own judgment of their career attainment. Studies on subjective career success used measures such as career satisfaction (Martins, Eddleston & Veiga, 2002;
Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001; Poole, Langan-Fox & Omodei, 1993), job satisfaction (Judge et al., 1995; Burke, 2001), advancement satisfaction (Martins, Eddleston & Veiga, 2002), and perceived career success (Turban & Dougherty, 1994), among others.

While objective measures of success are important, they may not be the only measures an individual wants to achieve. Inasmuch as individuals define career success based on their assessment of career prospects (Ebadan & Winstanley, 1997), individuals expect a lot more from their careers other than compensation, promotion, and other objective measures. Individuals also expect to learn new skills, challenge, and work life balance, among others (Gattiker & Larwood, 1988; Heslin, 2005). Several authors have also pointed out that when relationship between objective and subjective career success is found (Judge & Bretz, 1994), it is influenced by different factors (Ng et al., 2005)—e.g., relationship may be found in males but not in females (Mayrhofer et al., 2008)—or that objective and subjective career success may not be related at all (Hall, 2002; Brelang et al., 2007). Thus there is need to understand further the dynamics of career success in the Philippine setting by looking at both objective and subjective measures.

This paper identifies factors affecting career success using both objective and subjective measures.

Research on career success is very important to both the individual and organization. For individuals spending about a third of their time at work, career success is a logical expectation. On the other hand, to organizations, employees’ attainment of career success implies that employees have achieved organizational goals and thus may be leveraged for sustained competitive advantage.

To achieve career success, both the individual and the organization invest time, effort, and resources on career development activities. Ideally, career development is a joint responsibility of the individual and the organization. However, business activities such as downsizing, reengineering, and restructuring, which result in fewer workers and lesser opportunities for them in the organizations, render career development more challenging. Such diminished growth and opportunities present challenges as well for the individual to take a more proactive role in his career development (Heslin, 2005; Feldman, 1996).

**FACTORS INFUENCING CAREER SUCCESS**

Studies have identified several factors influencing objective career success, which can be categorized into human capital, demographic, interpersonal processes, and organizational (Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991; Whitely & Coetsier, 1993).

Human capital factors include experience, education, continuous work history, and tenure. Becker (1975) argued that investments in human capital result in higher wages due to increases in productivity. Such productivity increases may be the result of training, learning new skills, or enhancing existing skills. Empirical studies along this line show that human capital factors indeed influence different measures of career success. For example, education is positively related to current pay grades (Daley, 1996). Moreover, factors such as having an MBA, longer work experience, and a continuous work history positively influence compensation (Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991; Whitely & Coetsier, 1993; Forret & Dougherty, 2004). Work experience (Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991; Whitely & Coetsier, 1993) and continuous history also positively influence promotion rate (Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991; Forret & Dougherty, 2004).
Demographic factors commonly studied include gender and marital status. There are evidences that show gender differences in compensation and other work-related outcomes in organizations, for example, male employees receive higher compensation (Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991; Whitely & Coetsier, 1993; Daley, 1996; Lobel & St. Clair, 1992). However, differences in merit increases between genders ceased to be significant when other considerations, such as career identity salience and family responsibility, were controlled (Lobel & St. Clair, 1992). Moreover, in a study using longitudinal research design, Shenav (1992) found that white women’s opportunities were better compared to those of white men in the private sector. However, a different scenario emerges when a cross-sectional design was used on the same data set.

Shenav (1992) shows that women and blacks had lower chances of promotion to managerial positions compared to male and white samples. The finding was more congruent with results supporting gender segregation. However, Pfeffer and Davis-Blake (1987) found that the proportion of women in the organization is negatively associated with compensation of both men and women in both cross-sectional and longitudinal research design. Another demographic variable commonly studied in relation to career success is marital status. Several studies show that married employees have higher salaries and number of promotions than non-married employees (Ng et al., 2005; Judge et al., 1995; Judge & Bretz, 1994; Pfeffer & Ross, 1982).

Organizational factors like organization size also affect career outcomes. Whitely and Coetsier (1993) reported that organization size positively relates to number of promotions. It is thought that larger organizations have greater ability to pay and offer more promotion opportunities (Whitely & Coetsier, 1993).

In addition, interpersonal process like mentoring has also been found to affect career success. Mentoring includes coaching, support, and sponsorship, which provide the protégés the technical and interpersonal skills, and visibility opportunities that enable them to succeed in their careers (Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991). Having a mentor positively influences compensation (Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991; Whitely & Coetsier, 1993); promotability (Wayne et al., 1999), and salary grades (Daley, 1996). However, the gender of the mentor affects career outcomes. Female mentors negatively influence the protégé’s career success (Daley, 1996), but male mentors positively influence compensation of protégés, especially for women protégées in male-gendered industries (Ramaswami et al., 2010).

The above studies show factors affecting objective measures of success such as compensation, pay grades, number of promotions, and promotion rates. While objective measures are important in assessing how far an individual’s career has progressed, subjective measures are equally important, considering that individuals have expectations from work other than compensation, promotion, etc. Inasmuch as prospects of long-term employment are dim such that individuals are expected to be more proactive in managing their careers, career measures of success become more personal and subjective (Van Dam, 2008).

There seems to be no consistent result showing which variables influence subjective career success. Judge et al. (2005) found that different set of variables predicted the two measures of subjective career success, namely, career satisfaction and job satisfaction. Demographic and human capital variables significantly explained career satisfaction but not job satisfaction. Motivational and organizational variables explained job satisfaction. However, organizational success influences both job and
career satisfaction. On the other hand, Aryee, Chay and Tan (1994) found no human capital variable explaining subjective career success.

Specific individual factors found to predict subjective career success include tenure, education, and marital status. Clark and Oswalt (1996) found a positive relationship between education and job satisfaction, but such relationship vanished when controlled for income levels. However, tenure is inversely related to career satisfaction (Judge et al., 1995). On the other hand, married employees in general (Ng et al., 2005) and married women in particular (Punnet, 2005) are more satisfied than those who are not.

On the other hand, organizational factors affecting subjective career success include perceived organizational support in the form of mentoring, supervisory support, developmental assignments, and role conflict and ambiguity. Mentoring was found to be positively related to subjective career success (Joiner, Bartram & Garreffa, 2004; Eby, Butts & Lockwood, 2003; Fagenson, 1989). Perceived supervisory support (Tanski & Cohen, 2001; Kirchmeyer 1998) influences career satisfaction. Training received by individuals also influences career satisfaction (Ng et al., 2005; Wayne et al., 1999). In addition, role conflict (Bedeian & Armenakis, 1981) and role ambiguity (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999) are negatively related to job satisfaction.

Studies on career success in the Philippines show that different measures of career success have different determinants. Cash compensation is determined positively by work experience (Supangco, 2001), tenure in organization, and education (Supangco, 2010), and negatively by supervisory support (Supangco, 2010). Number of years per promotion is negatively determined by number of organizations worked for while number of promotions was determined negatively by number of organizations worked for and positively by work experience (Supangco, 2001). On the other hand, rate of promotion was positively determined by work experience (2010). Moreover, number of rank levels from the company president was determined positively by organization size, and women were farther from the top. Determinants of career satisfaction included supervisory support, perceived organizational support, and developmental experience. In these two studies, gender objective and subjective measures of success were invariant to gender, except for hierarchical success, measured in terms of number of rank levels from the company president where women were still far from the top. The general results on gender augur well for women in the Philippines and also make the phenomenon unique and in contrast to most studies conducted in the United States and Europe that indicate gender differences, especially in objective career success.

**METHODOLOGY**

The following sections describe the methodology used in this study. This includes sampling, data processing, and measurement of variables.

**Sampling**

Data were collected in July-August 2010 using a structured questionnaire. The sample students were chosen using systematic sampling with a random start. A total of 190 questionnaires were sent to selected students who were enrolled in the MBA program of the University of the Philippines during the first trimester of academic
year 2010-2011; 76 students sent back their accomplished questionnaires, or a response rate of 39.8%.

**Data processing**

In order to determine the patterns of career success, the author analyzed data using frequency distributions, means, and mode. To arrive at the factors affecting career success, a series of step-wise regression analyses were conducted. For all the measures of career success, non-perceptual measures, except those represented by dummy variables, were entered first. Once significant variables were determined, perceptual measures were entered. Again once a model is arrived at, categorical variables were added using multiple regression. Non-significant variables were removed to arrive at the final models. Only the final models for all the three measures of career success are presented in this paper.

This study utilized multiple items in measuring a concept, derived from different studies, thus the need to empirically examine their dimensionality (Snell, 1992). Items under each concept were summarized using factor analysis with varimax rotation.

**Measures**

The following describes how variables in this study are measured. Perceptual and non-perceptual measures were utilized.

**Dependent Variable**

Objective measures of career success include total cash compensation and number of levels from the company president.

The subjective measure of career success was a career satisfaction scale developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990), which assessed the degree to which the individual has progressed toward income, advancement, and skill development goals as well as general satisfaction with career progress. Reported coefficient alpha values range from .83 to .89 (Fields, 2002). Coefficient alpha in this study is .89.

**Independent Variables**

Independent variables used in this study include both perceptual and non-perceptual measures. Perceptual measures include the following:

- **Supervisory support:** Supervisory support was measured using a scale developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990), which assesses employees’ perceived support that they get from their supervisors in doing their jobs (Fields 2002). Reported coefficient alpha was .90 (Fields, 2002). Coefficient alpha in this study is .92.
- **Developmental experience:** Developmental experience was measured with a scale developed by Wayne, Shore, and Liden (1977), which assesses the extent to which organizations invest in formal and informal training and development for employees. Reported coefficient alpha was .87 (Fields 2002). Coefficient alpha in this study is .90.
- **Perceived organizational support:** Perceived organizational support is measured by a scale developed by Eisenberger (1986) that assesses
employees’ perceptions of the degree to which their organizations value their contributions and well-being. Reported coefficient alpha values ranged from .74 to .95 (Fields 2002). Coefficient alpha in this study is .91.

- Role conflict: Role conflict is measured by a scale developed by House, Schuler, and Lavanoni (1983). Reported coefficient alpha values ranged from .79 to .86 (Fields, 2010). Coefficient alpha in this study is .83.

- Role ambiguity: Role ambiguity is measured by a scale developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970). The scale measured the degree to which employees experienced absence of predictability, clarity, and certainty in their roles. Coefficient alpha values ranged from .71 to .95 (Fields 2002). Coefficient alpha in this study is .86. Due to the reverse wording of the statements, the term used in this study is role clarity.

- Procedural justice: Procedural justice is measured by a scale developed by Parker, Baltes, and Christiansen (1977). It measures voice and choice dimensions of procedural justice by assessing employees’ perception of the extent to which they provide inputs and are involved in decision making. Reported coefficient alpha value was .74 (Fields 2002). Coefficient alpha in this study is .80

- Distributive justice: Distributive justice is measured using a scale developed by Nichoff and Moorman (1993). This scale measures the extent to which employees perceive their work outcomes—such as pay level, work schedule, workload, and job responsibilities—as fair. Reported coefficient alpha values ranged from .72 to .74 (Fields, 2002). Coefficient alpha in this study is .84

On the other hand, independent variables using non-perceptual measures include the following:

- Average number of employees in the organization in 2009
- Average number of employees in department in 2009
- Years of work experience
- Tenure in position
- Tenure in organization
- Number of organizations worked for
- Mentoring, designated with 1 when the individual has a mentor and 0 otherwise
- Gender, where female was assigned a value of 1 and 0 otherwise
- Marital status, where single was assigned a value of 1 and 0 otherwise

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 presents means and standard deviations of variables included in the models of career success. Respondents’ average annual compensation was Php 589,898.55, and they were 5.4 levels away from the company president. They have worked an average of 6.8 years in about 2.5 organizations. They have been in their current organization for about 3.77 years and in their position for some 2.14 years. They worked in their first organizations for about 33.9 months (2.8 years). A little over three quarters (76.3%) reported having a mentor. Half of the respondents were females and about 81.6 % are single.
Table 1
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>MEAN/MODE</th>
<th>STANDARD DEVIATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Compensation</td>
<td>P589,898.55</td>
<td>P351,695.52</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Rank Levels from President</td>
<td>5.4394</td>
<td>2.8073</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience (Years)</td>
<td>6.81</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Organizations Worked For</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure in Organization (Years)</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure in Position (Years)</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure in First Organization (Months)</td>
<td>33.8750</td>
<td>33.4317</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Experience</td>
<td>Had Mentor: 76.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male and Female: 50%</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Status</td>
<td>Single: 81.6 %</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 presents bivariate correlations of variables included in the final models of career success. The three measures of career success—compensation, rank levels from the president, and career satisfaction—are not correlated at the p<.01 and p<.05 levels. However, compensation and levels from company president are correlated at p<.10. Among the explanatory variables, tenure variables are related to total work experience, while role clarity is related to the other two perceptual measures: procedural justice and developmental experience. However, size variables (employees in organization and employees in department) are not related.

Table 2
CORRELATION MATRIX OF SELECTED VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Compensation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.178</td>
<td>.218*</td>
<td>.533*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rank Levels from President</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Career Satisfaction</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Employees in Department</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Employees in Organization</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Procedural Justice</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.5*</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Developmental Experience</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.11</td>
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Table 2

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<th>11</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Role Clarity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Tenure in First Organization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.30</td>
<td></td>
<td>.8*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Tenure in Position</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

*p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01

Table 3 shows the standardized coefficients of variables that determine the three measures of career success.

Model 1 explains 56.7 percent of the variation in compensation. The model shows two individual factors—work experience (a human capital variable) and civil status (a demographic variable)—explaining differences in compensation. In addition, organizational variables, such as size and perceived procedural justice, significantly explain differences in compensation. Work experience, perception of procedural justice, and size of employee department positively influence compensation, while single employees earn less than married employees in the sample.

The result on work experience is consistent with the findings of previous works on career success measured in terms of compensation (Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991; Whitely & Coetsier, 1993; Supangco, 2001; Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Ng et al., 2005). Higher compensation earned by married individuals is also consistent with Pfeffer and Ross (1982) and Ng et al. (2005), among others.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Model 1 Compensation</th>
<th>Model 2 Rank Levels from President</th>
<th>Model 3 Career Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>.345**</td>
<td>-.191**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure in Position</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.272**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure in First Organization</td>
<td></td>
<td>.233*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td>.278**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Clarity</td>
<td></td>
<td>.379**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural Justice</td>
<td>.258**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees in Department</td>
<td>.196*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees in Organization</td>
<td></td>
<td>.396**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Status</td>
<td>-.382**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dummy for Outliers in Rank Level</td>
<td></td>
<td>.680**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.567</td>
<td>.659</td>
<td>.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>18.661**</td>
<td>37.399**</td>
<td>12.536**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05; **p<.01

Model 2 explains 65.9 percent of variation in rank levels. Both individual and organizational factors account for differences in the rank levels of employees. Distance from the topmost position in the organization is inversely related to work
experience and positively related to organizational size. The latter is consistent with Supangco (2001) and Whitely and Coetsier (1993).

Model 3 explains 41.4 percent of variation in career satisfaction. Two individual factors (tenure in first organization and tenure in position) and two organizational factors (role clarity and developmental experience) explain differences in career satisfaction. Tenure in first organization is directly related to career satisfaction, but tenure in position is inversely related to it. Both developmental experiences and role clarity positively influence career satisfaction. The influence of developmental experience is consistent with the findings of Supangco (2010), which found a positive effect of developmental experience on career satisfaction in addition to supervisory support and perceived organizational support.

The only common predictor between the two measures of objective career success is work experience, which is a human capital variable. Inasmuch as work experience provides an individual specific knowledge and skills that are valuable to the organization providing such, the individual enjoys its rewards either through higher compensation or hierarchical status.

The model explaining compensation also shows that, on average, single employees earn less than married employees. To the extent that married employees are perceived to be more responsible (Pfeffer & Ross, 1982) and decide based on several concerns including family responsibility (Huang, Lin & Chuang, 2006), they are given more opportunities for career success. But when added family responsibility is expressed as a motivation to work longer hours and accept more difficult assignments, being married becomes a human capital variable signaling willingness to work long hours and accept difficult assignments. Size of the department is also positively related to compensation. The size of the department is an indication of its importance to the organization, thus signaling its ability to pay its employees (Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991). From the resource dependence perspective, it is argued that organizations are able to recruit better workers when they are presented with a wider source of talents. This argument can be extended to departments within organizations. Organizations or core departments within an organization may engage in activities that enhance its control over resources, or develop their substitutes (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). For example, in ensuring the control of human resources that are more critical in private institutions than in public organizations, incumbents in such positions were paid relatively higher in the former compared to the latter (Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1987). Another factor that positively influences compensation is procedural justice. To the extent that employees are given a say in important aspects of making decisions, they exercise control over the outcome of their work, including performance and rewards. Exercising voice over aspects of work may result in equitable outcome, in enhancing control of favorable outcomes, or simply in leading to desired outcomes (Greenberg, 1990).

In addition to work experience, organizational size explains hierarchical success, measured in terms of the number of level from the company president. This finding is consistent with the findings of Supangco (2001). Other things being equal, those who work in larger organizations are positioned farther from the company president. Larger organizations exhibit greater vertical complexity (Child, 1974). Although there may be more promotion opportunities in larger organizations, the steps to the top may also be longer (Whitely & Coetsier, 1993).

Subjective career success measured in terms of career satisfaction is explained by individual factors such as tenure in first job and tenure in position, and by organizational factors such as developmental experiences and role clarity. Tenure in
first job is positively related to career satisfaction. Tenure in first job is an indicator of early career success. Employees who are not promoted have the tendency to entertain withdrawal intentions and behaviors (Johnston et al., 1993). In addition, early career success facilitates late career success (Dreher & Bretz, 1991). Employees who experience early career success are seen by others more favorably; they also develop a strong sense of self-efficacy that enables further successes (Rosenbaum, 1984). On the other hand, employees who particularly track their own career advancement provide a timetable for them to be in a position. When one is in a position for too long, one entertains withdrawal thoughts and behavior. Indeed, employees at ceiling position have higher tendency to leave their organization when they have stayed too long in a position (Zhao & Zhou, 2008). Moreover, developmental experiences positively influence career satisfaction. This result is consistent with Ng et al. (2005) and Supangco (2010). Blau (1964) argued that behaviors and attitudes in social exchanges in organizations are governed by the norm of reciprocity. When organizations provide avenues through which employees exercise their abilities while they satisfy their needs or achieve their expectations, employees reciprocate such actions to the organization (Prince, 2005). These reciprocal behaviors take the form of higher performance, positive attitudes, and greater work satisfaction, among others. In addition, role clarity is directly related to career satisfaction. To the extent that role clarity reduces tension, job satisfaction is enhanced (Bedeian & Armenakis, 1981). Employees with clear understanding of their expectations are able to manage the different demands from work and working, thus they experience higher career satisfaction.

**CONCLUSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study identified organizational and individual determinants of career success. Objective career success was measured in terms of total annual compensation and number of rank levels from the company president, while subjective career success was measured in terms of career satisfaction. These measures are not correlated with each other, consistent with studies of Korman, Wittig-Berman, and Lang (1981) and Supangco (2010).

Both organizational and individual factors determine career success. Moreover, the three measures of career success generally have their distinct determinants. The result is consistent with studies that looked at objective and subjective career success (Ng et al., 2005; Supangco, 2010) and even those that looked only at objective career success (Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991; Daley, 1996; Supangco, 2001).

Organizational factors that account for differences in annual compensation are department size, which represent resource capability of the department to offer higher compensation, and procedural justice, which affords an environment that offers employees the opportunity to have a say in aspects of their work, enabling them to have control over favorable career outcomes. Individual factors include work experience and marital status, where married employees receive higher compensation. Work experience provides employees knowledge, skills, and relationships that enable them to perform better and get more rewards. The added responsibility of being a married employee provides reason for employees to work harder and accept more challenging assignments.

Number of levels from the company president is also explained by work experience. The longer the work experience, the more knowledge, skills, and
relationships an employee has gained and the closer the employee is to the topmost position in the organization. Organizational size provides the structural framework in the career ladder. The larger the organization, the more vertically complex it is, thus more steps in the career ladder to climb.

Determinants of career satisfaction also come from organizational and individual factors. Organizational factors come from employees’ perception of the developmental experiences provided by the organization and role clarity.

While the different measures of success possess different determinants, the results clearly show that career success depends on the actions of both the organization and the individual.

This study has several limitations. For one, the sample of the study consists of MBA students from the University of the Philippines. As such, they may not necessarily represent the cross section of the working population in the country. That they are in the MBA program of the University of the Philippines speaks of their above-average cognitive ability, given the stringent selection procedure of the program. Some of these students are part-time students, which actually speaks of their superior ability to balance the demands of work, the MBA program, and other aspects of their lives. Such concern may also account for the majority representation of single employees (81.6 percent), inasmuch as family responsibility increases time demand on these students, among others. Using homogeneous group of an all-MBA sample also precludes the use of education as an explanatory variable. Another limitation of the study is its cross-sectional design, which limits conclusion regarding causality. This study does not also include variables on personality dimensions, which could have better captured the complexity of career success. This can be an area of future research.

Gender did not explain variation in total compensation, number of levels from the company president, and career satisfaction. Such findings are consistent with Supangco (2001) and Supangco (2010). These null results have several implications. First, there exist income and status parity between female and male MBA students. Second, it challenges the generalizability of findings on gender differential in income, status, and career satisfaction common in studies based on samples from the United States and Europe. These results point to an interesting area of cross-cultural research on career success.
References


