

# A Systematic Literature Review On Career Success: An Analysis Of Definition, Measurement, Theoretical Perspectives And Future Research

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## Abstract:

Career success research is like a snowball, shown by the increasing number of publications of conceptual and empirical studies every year. Although studies of career success continue to evolve, very few studies have evaluated and synthesized these findings. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by analyzing and synthesizing the definition of career success, career success measurement tools, theoretical framework, and recommendations for future research. Systematic Literature Review was adopted as the research method with analysis and synthesis of 31 career success articles. Six databases are used: Springer Link, Science Direct, Sage Journals, Emerald Insight, Eric, and Taylor & Francis. The inclusion criteria in this study are (1) articles starting from the last ten years, namely 2012-2021, (2) There are the term "career success" in the title, abstract, or keywords, (3) Articles that have gone through peer review, review and published (4) Using English and (5) empirical or conceptual articles. The study findings highlight career success as both a process and an outcome. various measuring instruments and main theories are used as research references. Recommendations for future studies include expanding the definition of career success in adolescence, developing career success instruments, testing major theories, and developing intervention models to improve career success.

**Keywords:** Career Success, Systematic Literature Review, Career Counseling.

## I. Introduction

Career success is part of life and success in life. Everyone has the right to strive for career success. Career success provides benefits for everyone. Career achievements affect self-happiness, and happiness also creates career success (Walsh, Lisa; Boehm, Julia; Lyubomirsky, 2018). In achieving this happiness, some people continue to try their best to succeed in studying, working, family, and society. Some have succeeded in working in education, health, law, economics, arts, sports, agriculture, forestry, transportation, technology,

telecommunications, etc. Those who are successful enjoy the field of work they do. Their success is recognized by their friends and the surrounding community (Supriatna & Budiman, 2009).

The term career success begins with the term vocational success by Dr Thorndike. Vocational success is the preparation and prediction of the suitability of the student's major in the future with plans. It has to do with how to measure and predict success. Vocational success is measured by the suitability of

students with their majors and jobs and their assessment of job satisfaction (Thorndike et al., 1934).

Career success was developing from historical and contextual times. It begins with collective norms in a society where the economy is the result and continues to organizations in the form of appreciation and individuals where satisfaction, motivation, and well-being are the outcome (Benson et al., 2013). Individuals, organizations, and society face direct consequences of "career success" social construction. Career success's origins and conditions shifted away from the materialist objective and the psychological subjective.

To date, research focusing on career success is becoming more and more widespread. It can be seen from the articles published in the last decade, both from the development of the definition of career success, conceptual, measuring tools, and indicators related to career success. However, no recent study explicitly examines how to compile and synthesize any existing research.

Therefore, this systematic literature review compares and develops the career success literature. This research focuses on the existing definition of career success, the theoretical framework, and how career success instruments and research methods are currently developing. This study also recommends future researchers based on research limitations on career success.

## 2. Method

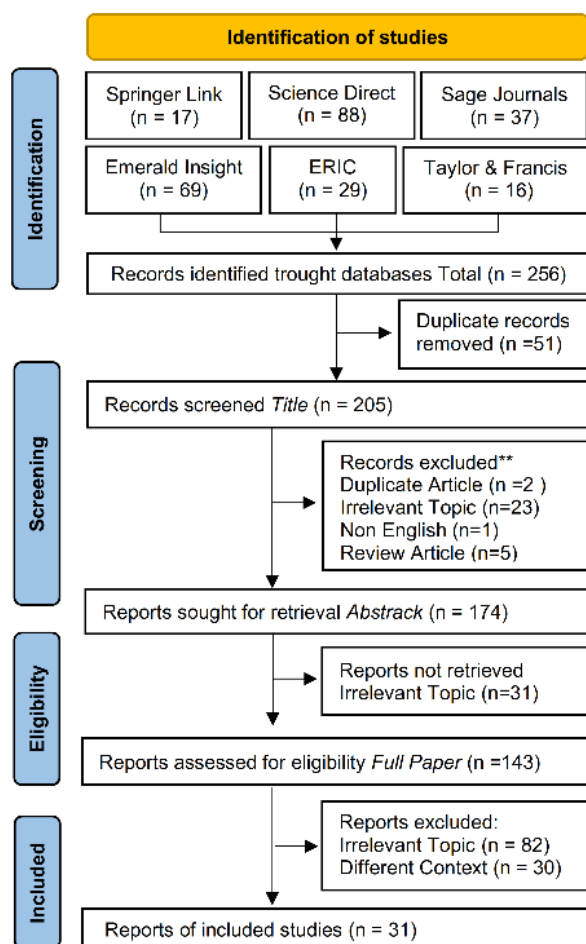
The method used in this article is a systematic literature review using the PRISMA technique.

The systematic review was conducted sequentially, beginning with the identification phase, screening, eligibility determination, and finally, data abstraction and analysis using the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

At the identification stage, the search is carried out using the phrase "career success" in all database sources' titles, not only career or success. The search focus is limited to titles that have that phrase, in journal articles, from 2012 to 2021. Six databases were used to produce the data for this study: Springer Link, Science Direct, Sage Journals, Emerald Insight, Eric, and Taylor & Francis. The inclusion criteria in this career success are (1) articles ranging from the last ten years, namely in 2012-2021, (2) There are the term "career success" in the title, abstract, or keywords, (3) Articles that have been through peer review, reviewed and published, (4) Using English (5) empirical or conceptual articles

The exclusion criteria in this career success article are (1) articles that range outside the last ten years, namely in 2012-2021, (2) The title, abstract, or keywords do not contain the term "career success", (3) Articles containing has not gone through peer review books, these are not included in this article, (4) do not use English, (5) review articles such as systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses are not included of the document. The flow of explanation can be seen in Figure 1

### Figure 1: Flow of study selection systematic literature



At the identification stage, 256 articles were obtained from six databases, and duplicate articles were checked. There are 51 similar articles, so the total number of articles that enter the screening stage is 205. The first screening stage focuses on article titles by removing duplicate articles, unrelated topics, non-English articles, and article reviews. Furthermore, in the abstract screening, there are 174 articles. In this session, 31 articles are not in line with career success. The eligibility session focused on 143 articles read and tested in the full paper. The results of the eligibility phase are continued with the included study

### 3.2. Defining Career Success

Researchers often define career success as an outcome, the results that a person obtains in the context of a career in life. This theoretical concept of career success refers to the definition presented by (Judge et al., 1994) that defined "the positive psychological or work-related outcomes accumulated from one's work experiences". Various research articles were found to refer to this definition as the primary

phase, in the last stage to analyze further the studied articles totalling 31 articles.

## 3. Findings And Discussion

This section describes the analysis and synthesis of the definition of career success, measuring tools used, and research methods of career success in the literature. The findings are discussed, and recommendations for further research are made.

### 3.1.

basis for their research (Ahmad et al., 2019; Converse et al., 2014; Danner et al., 2020; Nikitkov & Sainty, 2014; Zacher, 2014)

There are two types of professional success: objective and subjective career success, or extrinsic and intrinsic career success (Haines et al., 2014). Objective or extrinsic career success provides a definition, and the meaning of success is visible and measurable, the measures used are actual. Others can objectively

assess career success (Schwartz et al., 2016). Extrinsic career success is defined by observable consequences like pay (Converse et al., 2014). Numerous studies define career success using objective indicators, defined in this context as an individual's objective career successes (Abele et al., 2016).

In contrast to objective success, subjective career success is the second component. This success elucidates the notion of success as a sort of subjective individuality. Subjective career success is not judged by other people's size but by the individual's feelings, seen from satisfaction, comfort, happiness, and other subjective measures (Ishak, 2015). It discusses, in detail, how to have satisfied sentiments and a sense of success in one's career. According to certain research, this concept is solely used to indicate career success.

The accumulation of objective and subjective career success are what most researchers agree on (Schwartz et al., 2016). These concepts do not imply a one-sided view of career success, objective or subjective, but rather that career success must incorporate both. Furthermore, research findings indicate a correlation between objective and subjective career success. (Nikitkov & Sainty, 2014). Besides the contradiction of objective and subjective definitions, career success is also defined differently depending on the individual, work, community, and sociocultural context (Schwartz et al., 2016). The definition of career success also differs from country to country (Unite et al., 2014). Age, dynamics of life, and individual experiences influence the meaning of career success over Time (Afiouni, 2014).

Indirectly, this condition shows that success is not a fixed thing. Career success is a developing thing. It is also supported by other opinions stating that career success is not only the achievement of goals but can also be interpreted as a continuous process (Mayrhofer et al., 2016). The concept of career success as an ongoing process will have significance for how individuals enhance their careers. (Santos, 2016). We define career success as an individual's ability to accomplish in both self and work, based on synthesizing the concepts.

### **3.3. The Measurement of career success**

This section discusses the measuring tools used by researchers to evaluate career success.

Researchers commonly divide it into objective and subjective aspects to assess career success. the objective career success was using the size of each individual's salary, position, and title. At the same time, subjective career success is measured by job satisfaction and career satisfaction. Research (Converse et al., 2014; Danner et al., 2020) uses job satisfaction sales developed by (Wanous et al., 1997). This instrument produced answers ranging from 1 (very satisfied) to 4 (disappointed), and has reported the validity of measures (Wanous et al., 1997). Scores were calculated so that lower numbers indicated greater dissatisfaction (Converse et al., 2014).

Another instrument used by researchers (Yang & Chau, 2016) is six-item of perceived career success developed by (Eby et al., 2003). The scale includes two variables of perceived professional success: perceived internal marketability (3 items) and perceived external marketability (7 items) (3 items) (Yang & Chau, 2016).

The Career Satisfaction Scale is most researchers' most frequently used career success measurement (Greenhaus et al., 1990). The participants were prompted to respond five-item scale on five-point Likert scale (1 denotes significant disagreement, whereas 5 denotes strong agreement). "I am satisfied with my progress in achieving my overall career goals". This career satisfaction scale used by (Abele et al., 2016; Clark & Plano Clark, 2019; Guerrero et al., 2016; Haibo et al., 2018; Schwartz et al., 2016; Spurk et al., 2016; van Dierendonck & van der Gaast, 2013; Xie et al., 2016; Zacher, 2014). The career satisfaction scale has met the construct validity of subjective career success (Wolff et al., 2009). However, it needs to be updated or re-validated because it was developed in 1990.

The researchers (Nikitkov & Sainty, 2014) used perceived subjective career success was measured using a four-item scale developed by (Dougherty et al., 1994) with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  0.89. "Given your age, do you think that your career is on schedule, or ahead or behind schedule?" as an example of items. Participants respond to five-point scale that 1 for significantly below and 5 for significantly above the average (Nikitkov & Sainty, 2014). The last instrument used to determine career success was developed by (Briscoe et al., 2021). They constructed and validated a new subjective career success measure encompassing a broad

cross-section of country cultures (Briscoe et al., 2021).

### 3.4. The Research Design in Career Success

The career success research designs found in the literature grouped spoiled four methods.

Longitudinal, Mix Method, Qualitative and Quantitative. Research with quantitative methods is the most research on career success, namely 18 studies. The overall description can be seen in Table 1.

**Tabel 1. Table of Methodology Career Success Research**

No	Method	Quantity
1	Longitudinal	6
2	Mix Methode	3
3	Qualitative	5
4	Quantitative	18
	<b>Total</b>	31 Study

The quantitative research found generally examines the correlational variables associated with career success. In addition, the subjects used in current career success research are diverse. There are research subjects that focus on adult and adolescent age employees. However, research success on youth or adolescents is still minimal.

### 3.5. Research Theoretical perspectives adopted in career success research

The various theoretical frameworks have been used to understand career success. This study found four theories: Social Cognitive Career Theory, Social Capital Theory, Career Construction Theory, and Human Capital Theory.

#### Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social cognitive career theory is the development of various career theories that are integrated with social cognitive theory (Brown et al., 2011). These theories are called social cognitive career theories which focus on how to cope with change and development (Said et al., 2015). Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) highlights three interrelated aspects of careers, namely; the basis for the development of career and academic interests, how career and educational choices are determined and how career and academic success is achieved. Career success based on SCCT theory is defined as individual abilities that are built based on self-confidence, expectation of results and goals. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's ability to believe in doing a job with certain considerations. Expected results are individual abilities that refer to the consequences of the

results of their actions. Personal goals are the individual's ability to plan steps in achieving certain targets. Individuals who have goals will be able to set positive actions on themselves to achieve career success (Lent et al., 2002).

#### Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory (Bourdieu, 2011; Coleman, 1988) is a term that generally refers to materials that may be accessed through social networks. Social resource and social capital theories operate in tandem to complement and advance a social theory based on social network resources (Nikitkov & Sainty, 2014). Initially, the phrase "social capital" referred to individual resources utilized to grow members of community social groups. Career success is frequently quantified in objective success markers such as vertical development in position, responsibility, and extrinsic reward. According to researchers, there is a correlation between social capital and these three indices of professional achievement (Leana et al., 2012). In summary, social networks define various social capital resources essential for objective and subjective career success in terms of salary, advancement, and job and career happiness (Nikitkov & Sainty, 2014).

Other researchers who use the Social Capital theory are (Rode et al., 2017). They argue that emotional intelligence should be associated with an individual's capacity to develop supportive social networks or social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002), enabling increased job performance and related results. They propose that emotional intelligence increases an individual's probability of building a relationship with a mentor, a sort of social capital demonstrated to be positively related to

career success. Mentors might be either within or external to the participant's organization (Rode et al., 2017).

According to the findings, the intervention increased students' awareness of social capital and mentoring relationships, enhanced their knowledge, abilities, and self-efficacy for forming such connections, and affected their interactions with potential academic and professional mentors (Schwartz et al., 2016).

### **Career Construction Theory**

Career construction theory (CCT) was created by Savickas (Savickas, 2013), which switched from an organismic to a conceptualistic worldview of vocational development (Douglass & Duffy, 2015). According to Savickas (Savickas, 2013), human growth is fueled by continual adaptation to a social context with the goal of person-environment. The root term adapt, which encompasses both flexibility and adaptability, is used in career construction theory to refer to a chain of events that includes adaptable preparedness, adaptable resources, adapting reactions, and adapting outcomes. Adaptation is the degree to which an individual and their environment are compatible, as measured by success, happiness, and growth. According to CCT (Xie et al., 2016), career flexibility is expected to significantly explain the relationships between calling, job engagement, and career satisfaction. (Haibo et al., 2018).

Savickas career construction theory states that subjective and objective career success requires individuals who can adapt to their social environment. This theory examines how individuals attempt to meet their own expectations and the expectations of others about career success. These efforts include career preparation, ability to adapt to work, attitudes to face the demands of high work roles, transition periods and disruptions in work (Clark & Plano Clark, 2019).

### **Human Capital Theory**

According to human capital theory (Becker, 1975), individuals who spend heavily on human capital characteristics such as education, training, and experience are expected to perform better and earn a higher salary. These benefits include monetary compensation, ongoing progress, and professional development opportunities.

Another study demonstrates a positive relationship between human capital variables and professional success (Haines et al., 2014). Similarly, Hall and his colleague have concentrated on the subjective perspective of the individual career actor confronted with the external career realities of today's business environment. (Cillo et al., 2019). Because human capital may help employees advance their careers, it is regularly evaluated as a predictor of career success (Cesinger, 2011). However, research on this subject has primarily overlooked how human resources can adapt to the increasing pressures imposed by information technology advancements and their impact on career success (Cillo et al., 2019).

### **3.6. Agenda for future research on career success**

Although exposure and empirical findings of career success have been analyzed, there is a fundamental research gap from every side in terms of the main theories of career success, measuring tools and research methods used. In this section, inversion recommendations that can develop career success are presented.

#### **Opportunities for theoretical advancement**

The existing theoretical framework for career success is not complete and stand-alone. This framework departs from other theoretical concepts. With various theories of career success, it is necessary to compare the concept of career success in various theories. The current theoretical concepts have not been able to answer the concept of career success from each line. Generally, it only focuses on the field of work, while the existing career concept is a lifelong concept that covers across ages from the young to the old. Future researchers can integrate the concept of career development as a theoretical foundation for career success.

#### **Improving Measurement of career Success**

The current instruments for career success are very minimal in terms of measurement. Researchers generally use a career satisfaction scale to determine an individual's subjective career success. However, this measuring tool is too old and needs to be re-validated to be used properly and contemporary. In addition, the

measuring tool does not focus on a particular subject, whereas conceptually, career success has different meanings and definitions on the subject. This condition becomes a paradox, to maximize the existing findings, future researchers can develop or test the validity and reliability of career success instruments according to work, age and culture.

### **Improving research design**

Following the development of career success research designs found in the literature, it has now expanded to the correlational phase. Many existing studies examine the factors that can develop career success. Various variables have been tested empirically. The correlation is either negative or positive. For future researchers, the design of career success research can move and expand into the realm of intervention. Researchers can examine and test various efforts that can be made to develop career success. This can be done through career counselling, training, mentoring or other interventions aligned with the theoretical framework of career success.

### **Potential intervention to improve career success**

Based on the literature review, it was found that one of the interventions that can be done to develop career success is mentoring. Until now, there are only a few studies that reveal

### **4. Conclusion**

The conclusions from the systematic literature review article are based on the fourth main objective of writing this article. First, in terms of definition, the findings show that even career success is not only static or outcome but can also be interpreted as a process and can be developed. Second, there are four theoretical foundations for career success: Social Cognitive Career Theory, Social Capital Theory, Career Construction Theory and Human Capital Theory. Third, the career satisfaction scale is the most widely used measurement by researchers to determine the condition of a person's career success. Fourth, the recommendations for career success research extend from correlational-aimed methods to interventions to develop career success. Career success should also focus on the school and adolescence sector.

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intervention efforts to develop career success at the level of youth, adults, workers, professionals and so on. Studies of correlation studies reveal that mentoring is a medium between emotional intelligence and salary (Rode et al., 2017). Salary is one indicator of career success. Emotional intelligence can help careers achieve career success; this is a special form of social capital.

Mentoring is an intense development service between a mentor or experienced person and a mentee who needs help. This relationship is done to support the career development of the mentee. Mentors sacrifice time, energy and thought to accompany the mentee (Rode et al., 2017). The topic of mentoring studies focuses on career development. Mentoring provides facilities for mentees to expand social networks that can support their careers. In the context of work, for example, senior employees can help junior employees in certain tasks. Meta-analytical studies have also revealed a positive relationship between having a mentor and career success (Cumbler et al., 2018). Further research is needed on how empirically mentoring can support career success in adolescents. More specifically interventions that can help adolescents continue their careers in college or work (Schwartz et al., 2016).

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