

## Role Of Individual Participation And Organization Support In Career Success: Mediating Role Of Perceived Employability

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### Abstract:

The level of competency and skills possessed by an individual determines the scope of growth opportunities available to that individual both within and outside of the organization. They can advance their careers and achieve success because of it. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role that individual participation plays in competency development initiatives and their organizational support on his career success. Moreover, the indirect effect of perceived employability is also examined. The data was gathered from the various branches of three leading banks in Lahore, Pakistan. The results of the study reported that there is a significant relationship between employee participation, organization support in competency development, and career success. Moreover, perceived employability mediates the relationship between employee participation, organization support in competency development, and career success. There are important implications for practitioners who are looking for ways to increase the employability of workers and who want to benefit from the advantages of employability for both the organization and the employee. Further, it highlights the importance of competency development for both individuals and organizations.

**Keywords:** Employee participation in competency development initiatives, Perceived support for competency development, Perceived Employability, Career success

### Introduction

Globalization has influenced every walk of life by creating a competitive environment and engaging in a race seemingly unending, aiming for perfection. There is competition among individuals belonging to an organization. There is competition within organizations and countries. In this competitive environment, everyone is trying to become victorious by formulating diverse strategies. Organizations are in the front of this race. Organizations, while exploring different means to win this battle, have learnt that employees act as game changers who determine the success and failure of any organizations. It is also revealed that the talent and competency of employees which take the organizations on the road to success and turn the human resource as a strategic asset of organizations are very important (Joshi & Agarwal, 2011). Thus, it has become the need of time that companies must retain such employees who have sound knowledge and better skills. Because, such competent employees play significant role in the development and growth of the organizations. (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005). Hence, organizations for its own strategic interest start taking interest in employees' skill development (Rani & Joshi, 2012) and this approach ultimately assists employees in improving their own future (Lindley, 2002).

On the same lines, researchers found out that the companies assisting its employees to grow their competency, not only help the employer to be profitable and better performer but it also ensures employability of employees in the ever changing and growing market, which ultimately leads to career success (De Vos et al., 2011; Zafar & Mat 2012).

Further, De Vos et al. (2011) have observed in research that there is lack of work which examine the relationship between CS and PE in relation to another. Because mostly studied explorer in parallel to each other. There is dearth of research on PE from the point of view of combined influence of CD, organizational and individual (De Vos et al., 2009; De Vos et al., 2011; Zafar & Mat 2012). So, this study, which is being conducted on the employees of private banking sector of Pakistan, attempts to shed light on the role of organization initiatives for improving PE and how employee itself contributes to employee CS and see how SNS will help in improving the relationship of PE and CS. The findings contribute to the literature of CD, SNS, PE and CS.

## 1. Theory and hypotheses

### 1.1 Competency development

In this era of globalized competition, it is getting difficult for organizations to attract skilled employees. So, studies have suggested that organizations should start focusing on making its employee competent enough that they would effectively compete with the other organizations. The development of employees not only carried out by provision of growth opportunities but also by challenging them with work and then rewards them for their tasks (Renee et al., 2007). Competency development is defined as “an important feature of competency management which encompasses all activities carried out by the organization and the employee to maintain or enhance the employee’s functional, learning and career competencies” (Forrier et al., 2009). Where one HR professionals defined competency development as “activities and actions that we undertake to develop the competencies of our employees” (De Vos et al., 2011a). Likewise, De Vos and De Hauw (2010) researched that employees’ active interest in different developmental programs initiated by organizations assist them in building their competency. Hence, it could be said that to fully understand the notion CD for employees, it is important to take the organizational and individual point of view of CD.

### 1.2 Competency development and career success

Career success of a person “is a process of development of employees along a path of experiences and jobs in one or more organizations” (Baruch & Rosenstein, 1992). Researchers start exploring the role of individual effort and organization support in the career success of employees (De Vos et al., 2011). Researchers have divided career success in two different perceptive objective and subjective; subjectively it is one's own perceptive about one's career success (Arthur et al., 2005; Bozionelos, 2004; Judge et al., 1995; Ng et al., 2005) and objectively it specified as apparent recognized rank, the indicators of objective success are salary or status (Arnold & Cohen, 2008). Subjective indicator of career success is career satisfaction which is widely accepted indicator of career success (i.e. Heslin 2005). It is defined as an individual feeling of achievement which one feels when he/she has done a good work (Hall, 1996), this study has used Hall (1996) perceptive of career success. In recent researches, it has been reasoned that measurement of career success only objectively is not enough because people are now more subjectively looking at their career success (satisfaction or achievement) (Bridgstock 2009; Zopiatis, 2010).

Competency development improves the job experience of employees with the chance to have promotion and success in their career (Judge et al., 1995). Researchers are studying competency development in a balanced way (Baruch, 2006), integrated approach of organization and individual perceptive is better (De Vos et al., 2011). Renee Barnett (2007) study the impact of organizational support in career success of employees. For that purpose, the researcher collected data from employees from public and private sectors of different organizations. 40% of those employees were working on a managerial post. The results revealed that organizations support in the competency development of employees help the employees to improve their work experience and assist them in getting a successful career. The organizations have been playing vital role in the development and success of employees. As according to the study conducted by Lertwannawit et al. (2009) on tourism and hospitality sector, the results claimed that there exist positive association between competencies and career success of employees. As, the employees tend to be more successful in the organizations which have structural policies and procedure to develop employees within organizations rather than companies which do not follow such pursuit.

**Hypothesis 1a:** Employee participation in competency development initiatives is positively associated with career success.

**Hypothesis 1b:** Organization perceived support for competency development is positively associated with career success.

### 1.3 Competency development and employability

The construction of word employability can be viewed as: employment and ability. The employment referred to job while ability indicated skills and capabilities which is relevant to the labor market (De Cuyper et al. 2011). Employability has attracted many researchers to study the potential of this concept academically (Forrier & Sels, 2003). Rajan et al. (2000) discusses the wider use of employability concept, from HRM, from government policy making, and the way employers see the work and career of each employee. The concept of employability is operationalized using Rothwell & Arnold (2007) definition focused on holding a job “the ability to keep the job one has or to get the job one desires”. It suggest and as individual approach keeping an eye on the past and aiming at the future. In literature concept of employability is discussed in many ways. Like students first build their employability by learning adequate work skills during studies and then enter into the labor market and employ it (Harvey, 2001). Further, it assists individuals in overcoming job market difficulties and getting a job (Finn, 2000) and how employability helps people to be valuable for the job market (e.g. Forrier & Sels, 2003; Fugate et al., 2004).

Employability has been studied from two perceptive firstly, an organizational perspective which focused on employment culture for employees to increase employee retention in company's advantage (e.g., Nauta et al., 2009) and secondly from an individual perspective like improving the prospect of employment in external and internal market (Forrier & Sels,

2003). It is important because individual has to pay attention to its training and skill enhancement to improve its employability (Forrier & Sels, 2003). Scholarios et al. (2008) explained that for improving the employability of employees it is important for organization to pay attention to their competency development. One HR professional claimed that employability is the result of competency development as “by broadening the knowledge of your employees, you increase the employability of your people” (De Vos et al. 2011a). Thus, it indicated that employability and skills are significant for both employer and employees (Van Dam, 2004).

**Hypothesis 2a:** Employee participation in competency development initiatives is positively associated with perceive employability.

**Hypothesis 2b:** Organization perceived support for competency development is positively associated with perceive employability.

#### 1.4 Employability and career success

Employability has the potential to provide a road map for future career success (Bloch and Bates, 1995). It facilitates the employees to improve their career success and organization performance (Van Dam, 2004). Fugate et al. (2004) also looked at concept of employability as a way of compliance with career success. It was argued as an ability to gain promotions and move upward in career status by exploiting career opportunities in the way. From the career perspective, employability acted as a dynamic force which took employees on the higher level of organization. Berntson et al. (2006) study results reveal that if proper investment in career of individuals made it will enhance employees’ employability and career success. Berntson (2008) study reflected that employability regarded as an individual knowledge and skill one has according to one’s work which assists him/her in achieving higher status. Similarly, Olson & Shultz (2013) investigated employability and career success and their study support the assumption that employees believe on themselves that they have the ability to change job, improve their career. Zafar & Mat (2012) determined that CD and CS are positively related to each other. Similarly, De Vos et al. (2011) investigated the relationship between perceived employability and career success and found a positive relationship.

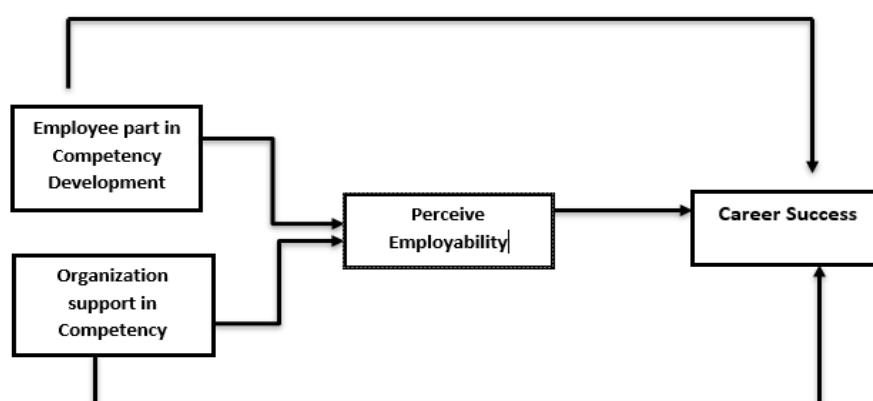
**Hypothesis 3:** Perceived Employability and career success is positively related to each other.

#### 1.5 Competency development, employability and career success

Literature provides evidence that there is a relationship between competency development, employability and career success. When the organization start supporting employee in their career and formulate the policies to assist employee in his/her career, employee start to respond positively to management policies. This study concluded that “organizational investment into developing capacity and employability makes the individual feel valued, and produces a higher level of motivation and commitment” which help the employees to grow (Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007). Zafar and Matt (2012) have studied the relationship of different variables like protean career attitude, competency development and employability to evaluate the success of academicians in their careers. The study has discussed that competency development improves the employability perception of academicians which leads them to successful career. Similarly, De Vos et al. (2011) research also studied the relationship between competency development and career success by using perceive employability as a mediator in Belgium's financial institution. The study revealed that perceive employability fully mediate the relationship between individual participation in CD. Where it partially mediates the relationship between organization support in employee competency development and career success.

**Hypothesis 4a:** Perceived employability mediates the relationship between employee participation in competency development and career success.

**Hypothesis 4b:** Perceived employability mediates the relationship between organization perceived support for competency development and career success.



## 2. Method

### 2.1.1 Participants and procedure

A survey was conducted in three leading private banks of Pakistan because studies suggest that competitive nature of banking sector has been demanding continuous skill and competency development of employees (Akhtar et al., 2011). This argument is further supported by another research which suggested that private banking sector employees perceived, they face more competition so required more ability development (Hassan et al., 2011). In addition, if organizations are able to design skill and development policies for employee than employees are more satisfied with their management and work. The study results further suggest that private banking sector employees are more satisfied because management pay attention to their needs (Hassan et al., 2011). HBL, UBL and MCB were selected as a top three banks by adapting the criteria mention by Saghar (2012) in his research. The banks were selected on the basis of its number of branches, profit before tax and total bank deposits.

Simple random sampling technique was use to distribute 400 questionnaires in 66 branches of selected banks, in order to achieve minimum 50% response rate. Kline (2005) has argued that a complex path model needs minimum sample size of 200 and above. 303 of them were returned which showed a response rate of 75.7%. However, the questionnaire which were returned, 46 were discarded because four of them returned blank. Nine put same response on each item of Likert scale. Eleven questionnaires were partially answered. Twenty one questionnaires had missing value. Therefore, remaining 257 questionnaires were used for further research. Final usable response rate in the study is 64.25%. The overall response rate has been sufficient because researcher was anticipating minimum 200 responses.

The findings have suggested that in banking sector of Pakistan there are more male (70.8%) employees working than the female. It has shown consistency with the previous research (Awan & Saeed, 2014). In addition, results of age group have suggested that majority of respondents 40% were aged among 26 year to 45 year. Further, large number of respondents 35.4% has gained experience around 5 to 10 years. In addition to that, analysis revealed that most of the respondent in this survey were from MCB which is 44.7 %. This suggests that the response rate from this bank is greater than other banks.

### 2.2 Measures

The variables introduced in the study were operationalized by using validated items. Some of these items are adapted to ensure the ease and uniformity of the scale. The wording of measurement was changed so that instrument was according to the understanding of employees and met the purpose of this research. The five point scale indicating 1= Never and 5=Always for employee participation in competency development and for rest of variables 1= Slightly Disagree and 5=Strong Agree were used.

Employee participation in competency development ( $\alpha=.860$ ) and organization support in competency development ( $\alpha=.828$ ) were measure by 12 items adapted from De Vos et al. (2011). Perceived employability ( $\alpha=.845$ ) was measured by 16 items and career success ( $\alpha=.855$ ) was measured by 8 items adapted from Rothwell & Arnold (2007).

### 2.3 Analytical Strategy

SPSS was used to analyses dataset for checking the missing value, univariate outliers, descriptive statistics, reliability and normality of variable. Further, SEM with AMOS 18.0 was used to analyze the relationship between the variables. The two step approach was used in this study. Firstly, Structural Model was employed to test the model fit and in the next step, hypothesis testing was conducted to see the direct relationship between the variables and to test the mediation and moderation.

## 3. Results

Prior to conducting any type of analyses using SEM, SPSS was used for basic data screening. The analysis activities were conducted to ensure the legibility of data entry. Simple frequency test was run to confirm no value was missing while data entry. Univariate normality was tested by using box plots (Carter et al., 2009) which indicated the absence of outliers in all the variables. Data normality was tested by using PP-plot (Hair et al., 2006). The mean standard deviation and correlation of all variables were tested and shown in Table 1.

Table 1

		M	SD	1	2	3	4
1	ECD	3.1751	.75672	1			
2	OCD	3.3204	.65777	.425(**)	1		
3	PE	3.6532	.55082	.387(**)	.557(**)	1	
4	CS	3.5136	.77106	.358(**)	.448(**)	.595(**)	1

The result of the mean score of all variables was above neutral point. This study has employed cross-sectional survey questionnaire and data collected from a single set of respondents: banking employees so there was probability of common method bias. To assess this Harman's single factor, test was used. The test result showed that there was no common method bias in using this measurement scale. Because, variance value was less than the threshold value 50, it was 21.164% (Chandio et al., 2013). In the next step SEM was run and Model Fit was examined using Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), and Normed Fit Index (NFI). The GFI=.990, CFI=.991, TLI=.910 and NFI=.989. These indicators suggest that model is a good fit (Hair et al., 1998). In the next step SEM was used to test the paths between the exogenous and endogenous latent variables. The results of hypotheses are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

Hypotheses	Hypotheses Relation	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
H1a	CS <--- ECD	.159	.057	2.782	.005	Supported
H1b	CS <--- OCD	.445	.054	8.308	***	Supported
H2a	PE <--- ECD	.102	.040	2.527	.012	Supported
H2b	PE <---OCD	.496	.038	13.163	***	Supported
H3	CS <---PE	.870	.052	16.822	***	Supported
H4a	CS <---PE <--- ECD	.083	.049	1.690	.091	Full Mediation
H4b	CS <---PE <---OCD	.075	.059	1.276	.202	Full Mediation

All hypotheses (i.e. H1a, H1b, H2a, H2b, H3, H4a, and H4b) were positively significant at acceptance level of  $p < 0.05$ . The highly positive significant coefficient path was between PE and CS ( $\beta = 0.752$ ). The lower positive significant path was between PE and ECD ( $\beta = .102$ ).

#### 4. Discussion

The present study aimed to contribute in the literature of career success. For this purpose, relationship between different constructs were tested. Firstly, results revealed that employee participation in competency development and organization support for competency development have both positive and statistically significant relationship with career success. It showed consistency with the previous findings (De Vos et al., 2011; Zafar and Matt, 2012; Ng et al., 2005; Lertwannawit et al., 2009). Since this study is conducted in banking sector of Pakistan, so the result of this hypothesis provides evidence that when employee of banking sector avails the skill development opportunities provided by their employer, it will help them in improving their career. Secondly, employee participation in competency development and organization support in competency development were both found a positive and statistically significant relation with perceive employability. It implied that if employees increase participation in competency development activities and organizations take active interest in employee competency and skill development, it will improve the employability of employees in the job market. The previous literature is aligned with this study results (Forrier & Sels, 2003; Van Dam, 2004; Scholarios et al., 2008; Nauta et al., 2009; De Vos et al. 2011a). Thirdly, hypothesis H3 is also accepted which indicated that that if the perception of banking employees is good about themselves that they have necessary skills and competency and are valuable for internal and external job market than it will help them in improving their career success (Van Dam, 2004; Fugate et al., 2004; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007; Berntson et al., 2006; Olson & Shultz, 2013).

The mediation of perceive employability (PE) was proved by the results. PE fully mediates the relation between ECD and CS, and OCD and CS which means inclusion of mediating variable has weakened the direct relationship between independent and dependent variable. The findings of De Vos et al. (2011) study showed that PE fully mediates the relation between ECD and CS, which is consistence with this study result. Full mediation effect of PE in the relationship between ECD and CS indicates that improving internal and external employability by actively engaging in competency development is an important means through which employee can attain CS. However, PE relation with OCD and CS is not in agreement with De Vos et al. (2011) results. There could be several reasons for this difference in results. For instance, the respondents of this research are banking employees of Pakistan where in De Vos et al. (2011) research conducted recruited employees of Belgian Financial institutes. This change in demographics could be one of the strong determinants of change in results. Mao and Palvia (2006) have suggested that strength and results of any model could vary due to change in cultural settings. Apart from it, PE fully mediated the relation between OCD and CS, indicates that developing internal and external employability with the help of organizational support of competency and skill development opportunities is a significant mechanism through which employee can achieve career success.

One of the strengths of this research is that it is carried out in a developing country (Pakistan) where according to the best knowledge, no researcher has studied SNS from the point of view of PE and CS. Therefore, this research provides empirical evidence to support the hypotheses which is the major contribution of this research.

#### 4.1 Limitation and Conclusion

This study is cross-sectional in nature, in future longitudinal study is needed to conduct to see how continuous competency development practices would affect an employee's perception. So, it is important that it should be tested in different contexts and study settings. The research in future can further expand this research model by adding additional factors. Moreover, increasing concept of employability and career success is studied from boundless career perspective (Guo et al., 2009). Zafar and Matt (2012) also suggest for including this variable in Pakistan setting along with CD, PE and CS. Therefore, current model should be explored from the perspective of boundary-less career in the future.

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