

# EVALUATING ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS' SUBJECTIVE CAREER SUCCESS IN ORGANIZATION

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*This study examines the factors affecting individuals' subjective career success based on the sponsor and contest mobility of career success (Turner, 1960; Rosenbaum, 1984). Authors this study tests hypotheses about the relations between organizational sponsorship, external marketability, person-organization fit, subjective career success, and life satisfaction. Therefore, managers and leaders know how to motivate their employees toward career achievement. To achieve this goal, authors use confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation model (SEM) to examine all of the three perspectives individual structural, and behavioral- in which the individual and behavioral approaches belong to the contest-mobility model of career success while the structural one belongs to the sponsored-mobility model. Research findings indicate that organizational sponsorship and external marketability make significant impacts on subjective career success and these relationships are positive. This study also examines a number of personal information like gender, marital status, age, highest diploma, and occupation, number of working years, and monthly salary when it comes to perceived career success. In addition, subjective career success also positively affects life satisfaction. The findings have important practical implications for managers and leaders who generally seek to motivate their employees toward career achievement.*

**Keywords:** Subjective career success, Organizational sponsorship, External marketability, Person-organization fit, Life satisfaction.

This study examines the factors affecting individuals' subjective career success based on the sponsor and contest mobility of career success (Turner, 1960; Rosenbaum, 1984). Subjective career success has been normally approached by three perspectives: individual, structural, and behavioral in which the individual and behavioral approaches belong to the contest-mobility model of career success while the structural one belongs to the sponsored-mobility model. With the four components of individuals' subjective career success: organizational sponsorship, external marketability, person-organization fit, and life satisfaction, the research makes an attempt to examine all of the three perspectives mentioned.

According to the sponsored-mobility model, those in positions of power within the organization pay special attention to those members who are deemed to have high potential. Because employees are more likely to be noticed and selected into an elite group, those who fit are more likely to express positive attitudes towards their career. Empirical evidence of associations between person-organization fit and positive employee attitudes proves this proposed association. Perceptions of person-organization fit and organizational sponsorship are therefore expected to also be associated with career success.

## I. Review of Literature

Subjective career success is defined as individuals' perceptual evaluation and affective reaction to their careers (Greenhaus et al., 1990; Turban & Dougherty, 1994). This is a way to measure individuals' career success besides objective career success which refers to observable career achievements which relates to an external assessment of professional achievements such as wage, frequency of promotions, and hierarchical status (Hennequin, 2009, as cited in Haines et al., 2014; London and Stumpf, 1982). Researchers report that a growing proportion of employees determine their career success in terms of subjective indicators than in terms of objective indicators (Eith, Stummer, & Schusterschitz, 2011; Littler, Wiesner, & Dunford, 2003; Sturges, Guest, Conway, & Davey, 2002).

Subjective career success is often a drive for individuals' lives, as a result understanding how to continuously enhance subjective career success is a need. Meanwhile there are many researchers conducted to investigate the factors of subjective career success taken in developed

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economies (Shen et al., 2015; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011; Lirio et al., 2007), there is less study of these drives carried out in such an emerging economy like Vietnam. In addition, after the global economic crisis since 2008, the unemployed has been increasing (Tanveer et al., 2012), therefore the labor force really needs to know how to remain their subjective career success by understanding the components of the career success. In Vietnam, the unemployed at the working age proportion had jumped from 2.38% in 2008 to 2.90% in 2009, followed by a dramatic decrease between 2010 with 2.88% and 2012 with 1.96%; however, the proportion tends to be increasing because there is 2.18% unemployment in the year 2013 (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2015).

Moreover, the competitiveness in the labor force in the global job market nowadays becomes fierce since Vietnam has been open and joining several associations to impulse the economic development of the nation such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the forthcoming Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Therefore, doing such a study like this not only helps the unemployed but also the employed in the labor force remain and enhance their career success. This situation pushes a need to examine the factors affecting individuals' subjective career success.

The overall objective of this study is to examine some antecedences and consequences of individuals' subjective career success in the Vietnamese context. Specifically, it investigates four factors taken into consideration which are organizational sponsorship, external marketability, person-organization fit, and life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1: Subjective person-organization fit is positively associated with subjective career success.

Hypothesis 2: Organizational sponsorship is positively associated with subjective career success.

Within the contest-mobility model of career success, the emphasis is on abilities, skills, accomplishments, devotion, involvement, performance on the job, and adding value to the organization. A person with valued skills and noteworthy accomplishments is likely to believe that he or she is valuable to other employers. That results in the third hypothesis needed to be tested as follows.

Hypothesis 3: Perceived external marketability is positively associated with subjective career success.

Satisfaction has been widely studied in the management literature (Spector, 1997). While it is a subjective variable that cannot be measured objectively, levels of reported satisfaction have been consistently related to a variety of behaviors; less satisfied employees are more likely to be absent, to quit their jobs, to change careers (Harrison and Martocchio, 1998), and to engage in counterproductive work behaviors (Spector et al., 2006; Harrison and Martocchio, 1999). Satisfaction therefore seemed to be an important variable to consider in the context of career success, because of the consequences of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: Subjective career success is positively associated with life satisfaction.

## II. Research Design & Methods

### Measurement scale

The survey instrument is administered in Vietnamese and all the scale items are translated by a translate-retranslate methodology (Brislin, 1970) to ensure that they accurately reflect the wording of the original version. To the extent that each of these items of the four constructs represents an employer inducement that applies to just about all of the respondents in the sample, the responses, codified on a scale ranging from 1 to 7, reflect the extent to which the respondent has received each inducement. Subjective career success (SCS) can be measured via self-reports and as a continuous variable. Researchers often use affect-based measures; participants are asked to evaluate the extent to which they are satisfied with their current career status or with different aspects of their career success (e.g., income or promotions) (Ng & Feldman, 2014). Subjective career success was measured with a five-item scale developed by Greenhaus et al. (1990). The response scale qualified degrees of satisfaction ranging from 1 (strongly dissatisfied) to 7 (strongly satisfied) and one of the items was reverse-scored.

Person-organization fit (POF) was assessed with a three-item scale that asked the respondents to rate the fit between themselves and their organization (Judge and Cable, 1997). The response scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

External marketability (EMA) was measured with a three-item scale used by Haines et al. (2014) and Eby et al. (2003). A sample item is "There are many jobs available for me given my skills and experience." The response format ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Organizational sponsorship (OSP) was measured by seven items measuring the extent to which the respondent's employer had honored the promise to offer various work conditions (i.e. perceived employer inducements) using points from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very strongly). This scale was adopted from Haines et al. (2014).

Finally, life satisfaction (LS) was measured by seven items adopted from Diener (1985, as cited in Zhang (2015)) using 7-point scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

The demographic variables included in the analysis are age, gender, education level, the presence of a spouse, and wage level. Age was measured in years. Gender was measured as female (1) or male (2). The highest diploma measured education level with the following values: high school (1), college (2), undergraduate degree (3), university Master's degree (4), and doctorate (5). The presence of a spouse was measured as either "not living with a spouse" (1) or "living with a spouse" (2). Wage level is included in the conceptual model as a control variable and is measured with six levels: Under 2,000,000VND (1); 2,000,000- under 5,000,000VND (2); 5,000,000- under 10,000,000VND (3); 10,000,000- under 15,000,000VND (4); 15,000,000- under 20,000,000VND (5); 20,000,000VND and above (6).

#### **Mix method**

Conducting a qualitative study is the first phase for scale refinement. Based on the previous research and the Vietnamese context, the draft questionnaire consists of demographic variables and four constructs which are organizational sponsorship, external marketability, person-organization fit, and subjective career success. Then, the draft questionnaire is translated from English into Vietnamese. Through a qualitative study, in-depth interviews with six people are conducted in order to refine all observed items of the draft questionnaire to make improvement for the official questionnaire used for later stage.

In the quantitative study, the adjusted questionnaire is used to collect data and then to test the measurement models and structural models. The convenient sampling approach is employed for this study in order to obtain an expected sample size of about 300. This study specifically focuses on the employees who necessarily have at least two years of working experience in Vietnam after graduation and they have to be between 22 and 59 years old. According to Vietnam context, after two years of graduation, employees will normally be 22 years old if

they study vocational training or college and they will be 24 years old if they take university training. Due to the fact that the majority of the labor in the year 2013 was between 25 and 49 years old and accounted for 59.9% of the above-15 labor force (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2015) and the maximum age of employment is 60, this research recruits the employed who are in the range of 22 and 59 years old. Indirect method via an online survey will be used to deliver questionnaires to participants.

To sum up, this study specifically focuses on the employees who necessarily have at least two years of working experience in Vietnam after graduation and they have to be between 22 and 59 years old. Indirect method via an online survey will be conducted to deliver questionnaires to participants. The convenient sampling approach was employed for this study in order to obtain an expected sample size of about 200.4

### **III. Analysis, Discussion & Findings**

SPSS 20 and Amos 20 or equivalent software will be used to test the model. The reliability and validity will be tested by running Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Then, Structural Equation Model (SEM) will be used to test the hypotheses.

#### **Participant demographic**

There were 150 valid people participated in the survey and the demographic description of participants has witnessed a diversity as indicated in table 2. The employment who participated in this study mainly includes Officers at a private company (39.3%), Professionals (31.3%), and Officers at a public organization (23.3%). The respondents whose longevity is ranging from 23 to 56 are about 32.3 years old on average. Their average number of working years is 9.2 with the highest year number is 31 and the lowest one is 2. Half of participants are female (48.7%) and living with a spouse (51.3%). The majority of respondents have earned an undergraduate degree (51.3%) as their highest diploma, followed by the second highest proportion of people who have had a master degree (39.3%). When it comes to the wage in terms of average monthly salary, 32.7% of the people joining in this study have earned from 10 to below 15 million VND per month. The rest is divided almost equally into three ranges of salary which are 5 to under 10 million VND (23.3%), 15 to 20 million VND (18.7%), and 20 million VND and above (24%).

With regards to the descriptive statistics of the measurement scale, there are 5 constructs including 23

question items coded as in table 3 below. The items employed in this study use the 7-point Likert scale where 1 is strongly disagree/dissatisfied and 7 is strongly agree/satisfied. All the items show the mean value which is above 4 and the standard deviation is below 2.

### **Scale reliability and validity**

#### **Reliability analysis**

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is computed to evaluate the scale's reliability and assess the consistency of items within the scale. According to Hair et al. (2010), the reliability coefficient is considered as acceptable if it meets the value of 0.7. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients shown in table 4 indicate that the reliability of the scales is sufficiently good since all of the coefficients exceed 0.7. Before accessing the results of the hypothesis testing, it is crucial to first examine the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scale. The SEM technique of measurement model is one of statistical techniques for testing hypotheses about convergent and discriminant validity.

The convergent validity was tested by examining the composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) from the measures (Hair et al., 2010). Four out of five CR scores of the constructs shown in table 5 exceed the threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). The AVE values (in table 5) exceed the recommended cut-off value of 0.50 (Fornell and Bookstein, 1982). Proven as in table 5, all the indicators using in this study are satisfactory for the convergent validity. The discriminant validity was supported when the square roots of the AVE for each factor is greater than the correlations between that construct with others. The discriminant validity analysis in table 6 indicates that all square roots of the AVE scores are greater than the corresponding correlation coefficients. Bold values on the diagonal are square roots of AVE value of constructs.

#### **Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)**

##### **CFA for Subjective Career Success**

The CFA result for subjective career success indicates that the measurement model of subjective career success acceptably fits to data because GFI = 0.871, TLI = 0.91, and CFI = 0.928. In this model, subjective career success consists of three sub-constructs which are person-organization fit, organizational sponsorship, and external marketability. All factor loadings of each item in this model are higher than 0.5.

##### **CFA for Measurement Model**

The CFA result for overall measurement model acceptably fits to data because GFI = 0.788, TLI = 0.891,

and CFI = 0.905. In this model, all factor loadings of each item in this model are higher than 0.5. The correlation between a pair of two constructs as shown in table 7 are relatively high

#### **The overall fitness of the structural equation model**

The structural equation model is proved to fit to the population data because of the following satisfactory indicators: two out of three indicators GFI, TLI, and CFI are above 0.9 (Steiger, 1990; Bentler & Bonett, 1980);  $CMIN/df \leq 2$  (Carmines & McIver, 1981); RMSEA is nearly smaller than 0.08 (Steiger, 1990).

#### **Hypothesis testing results**

The P-value and the sign of the Estimate of the Regression weights in table 9 show that Organizational Sponsorship has a significantly positive effect on Subjective Career Success (P-value < 0.001), confirming H2, and External Marketability has a significantly positive impact on Subjective Career Success (P-value = 0.04 < 0.05), confirming H3. Between the two significant factors affecting Subjective Career Success, Organizational Sponsorship shows a predominant effect on career success in individual's perception due to higher standardized coefficient. Interestingly, Person-Organization Fit does not show a significant impact on individual Subjective Career Success due to P-value = 0.208 > 0.05. When it comes to individual life, Subjective Career Success reveals a strongly positive impact on Life Satisfaction. This is confirmed by the tremendously small P-value which is below 0.001.

## **IV. Conclusion**

The findings have important practical implications for managers and leaders, who generally seek to motivate their employees toward career achievement. This research investigates the overview components of the individuals' subjective career success so every people in the labor force can take advantage of the research results. Based on the implication of the research, employees can understand more about what kind of components influence their career success in their organizations, which one weighs the largest and which one weighs the least so that they can recognize their strengths and weaknesses in order to make improvement where needed. In addition, the management board can also rely on the research insights to recognize whether the reward system and the company policy fit their employees' expectation or not.

Research findings indicate that organizational sponsorship and external marketability make significant impacts on subjective career success. These relationships

are positive and the effect of organizational sponsorship outweigh that of external marketability. Since subjective career success significantly and positively leads to life satisfaction, it is more than important to examine individuals' perceived success particularly sponsorship in an organization and external marketability. The organizational sponsorship based on individuals' view consists of 'Opportunities for professional development within the organization', 'Constructive employer-employee collaboration', 'Opportunities to use my skills and abilities', 'Interesting and challenging work', 'Recognition of my work', 'Recognition of my ideas and opinions', and 'Appropriate resources to perform the work'. This opens a number of topics regarding training, collaboration, leadership, motivation, and reward system. The management board also need to watch out the external marketability because it affects individuals' subjective career success. People express external marketability as 'There are many jobs available for me given my skills and my experience', 'Given my skills and my experience, other organizations consider me as a value-added', and 'I could easily obtain a comparable job with another employer'.

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**Table 1** Measurement Scale

Variable	Operationalization
<b>Subjective Career Success</b>	
SCS1	The success achieved so far in your career.
SCS2	The progress made to meet your career goals.
SCS3	The progress made to meet your goals salary.
SCS4	The progress made to allow you to advance in your career.
SCS5	The progress made in the development of new skills.
<b>Person-Organization Fit</b>	
POF1	My values, my goals and my personality fit my organization and its current staff.
POF2	My values and my personality prevent me from integrating my organization because they differ from those of most other employees
POF3	The values and the "personality" of my organization correspond with mine.
<b>Organizational Sponsorship</b>	
OSP1	Opportunities for professional development within the organization.
OSP2	Constructive employer-employee collaboration
OSP3	Opportunities to use my skills and abilities.
OSP4	Interesting and challenging work.
OSP5	Recognition of my work.
OSP6	Recognition of my ideas and opinions.
OSP7	Appropriate resources to perform the work.
<b>External Marketability</b>	
EMA1	There are many jobs available for me given my skills and my experience
EMA2	Given my skills and my experience, other organizations consider me as a value-added.
EMA3	I could easily obtain a comparable job with another employer.
<b>Life Satisfaction</b>	
LS1	In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

LS2	The conditions of my life are excellent.
LS3	I am satisfied with my life.
LS4	So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
LS5	If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.
Demographic	
Age	Years of age
Gender	0 = male, 1 = female.
Spouse	0 = no, 1 = yes.
Education	1 = high school, 2 = college, 3 = university certificate, 4 = university undergraduate degree, 5 = university graduate degree, 6 = university Master's degree, 7= doctorate.
Wage	1 = Under 2,000,000VND; 2 = 2,000,000- under 5,000,000VND; 3 = 5,000,000- under 10,000,000VND; 4 = 10,000,000- under 20,000,000VND; 5 = 20,000,000VND and above.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of demographic variables (Base=150)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Female	73	48.7	48.7
	Male	77	51.3	100.0
	Total	150	100	
Occupation	Officer at a public organization	35	23.3	23.3
	Officer at a private company	59	39.3	62.7
	Professional (teacher, doctor, layer, etc.)	47	31.3	94.0
	Self employed	3	2.0	96.0
	Unemployed	1	.7	96.7
	Others	5	3.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	
Living with a spouse	No	73	48.7	48.7
	Yes	77	51.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	
Highest diploma	High school	1	.7	.7
	College	3	2.0	2.7
	Undergraduate degree	77	51.3	54.0
	University Master's degree	59	39.3	93.3
	Doctorate	10	6.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	
Average monthly salary	2,000,000- under 5,000,000VND	2	1.3	1.3
	5,000,000- under 10,000,000VND	35	23.3	24.7
	10,000,000- under 15,000,000VND	49	32.7	57.3
	15,000,000- under 20,000,000VND	28	18.7	76.0
	20,000,000VND and above	36	24.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	
Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	23	56	32.32	7.076
Number of working years	2	31	9.19	6.912

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics of items (Base=150)

Variable code	Question Items	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
OSP1	Opportunities for professional development within the organization	1	7	4.9	1.4
OSP2	Constructive employer - employee collaboration	2	7	5.0	1.2
OSP3	Opportunities to use my skills and abilities.	2	7	5.3	1.3
OSP4	Interesting and challenging work.	1	7	5.3	1.3
OSP5	Recognition of my work.	1	7	5.1	1.3
OSP6	Recognition of my ideas and opinions.	1	7	4.8	1.3
OSP7	Appropriate resources to perform the work.	2	7	4.8	1.2
EMA1	There are many jobs available for me given my skills and my experience	2	7	5.0	1.3
EMA2	Given my skills and my experience, other organizations consider me as a value- added.	1	7	4.9	1.1
EMA3	I could easily obtain a comparable job with another employer	1	7	5.0	1.3
SCS1	The success achieved so far in your career.	1	7	4.9	1.1
SCS2	The progress made to meet your career goals.	2	7	4.7	1.1
SCS3	The progress made to meet your goals salary.	1	7	4.7	1.2
SCS4	The progress made to allow you to advance in your career.	1	7	4.5	1.1
SCS5	The progress made in the development of new skills.	1	7	4.7	1.1
POF1	My values, my goals and my personality fit my organization and its current staff.	1	7	5.2	1.2
POF2	My values and my personality prevent me from integrating my organization because they differ from those of most other employees.	1	7	5.2	1.5
POF3	The values and the "personality" of my organization correspond with mine.	2	7	4.9	1.1
LS1	In most ways my life is close to my ideal.	1	7	4.3	1.3
LS2	The conditions of my life are excellent.	2	7	4.3	1.3
LS3	I am satisfied with my life.	1	7	4.7	1.4
LS4	So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	1	7	4.7	1.3
LS5	. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	1	7	4.0	1.8

**Table 4.** Cronbach's alpha coefficients

Variable	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Cronbach's alpha [POF] = .792				
POF1	10.11	3.605	.655	.655
POF2	10.08	4.423	.672	.643
POF3	10.38	3.902	.564	.606
Cronbach's alpha [OSP] = .926				
OSP1	30.22	39.770	.755	.917
OSP2	30.19	41.727	.723	.919
OSP3	29.87	39.883	.828	.909



OSP4	29.87	41.472	.730	.918
OSP5	30.03	40.556	.797	.912
OSP6	30.33	40.371	.783	.913
OSP7	30.36	41.990	.758	.916
Cronbach's alpha [EMA] = .845				
EMA1	9.98	5.161	.669	.824
EMA2	10.03	5.328	.735	.766
EMA3	9.93	4.659	.737	.760
Cronbach's alpha [SCS] = .907				
SCS1	18.65	15.288	.738	.893
SCS2	18.81	14.815	.836	.873
SCS3	18.85	14.574	.769	.887
SCS4	19.01	14.584	.808	.878
SCS5	18.85	15.433	.688	.903
Cronbach's alpha [LS] = .918				
LS1	17.73	26.586	.827	.894
LS2	17.69	26.778	.822	.895
LS3	17.32	25.669	.817	.894
LS4	17.33	26.385	.819	.895
LS5	18.03	23.449	.727	.924

**Table 5.** Assessment of convergent validity

Variable	Construct reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
POF	0.504	0.661
OSP	0.892	0.804
EMA	0.785	0.807
SCS	0.868	0.815
LS	0.903	0.849

**Table 6.** Assessment of discriminant validity

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
POF	<b>0.813</b>				
OSP	0.808	<b>0.896</b>			
EMA	0.623	0.618	<b>0.898</b>		
SCS	0.707	0.791	0.612	<b>0.903</b>	
LS	0.722	0.648	0.549	0.731	<b>0.921</b>

**Table 7.** Correlation coefficients

			Estimate
EMA	<-->	SCS	0.612
OSP	<-->	EMA	0.618
POF	<-->	EMA	0.623
EMA	<-->	LS	0.549
POF	<-->	OSP	0.808
OSP	<-->	SCS	0.791
OSP	<-->	LS	0.648
POF	<-->	SCS	0.707
POF	<-->	LS	0.722
SCS	<-->	LS	0.731

**Table 8.** Overall fitness.

Criteria	Standard	Value	Result
GFI	GFI = 0.9	GFI = 0.805	Relatively Supported
TLI	TLI = 0.9	TLI = 0.908	Supported
CFI	CFI = 0.9	CFI = 0.92	Supported
CMIN/df	CMIN/df ≤ 2	CMIN/df = 1.962	Supported
RMSEA	RMSEA < 0.08	RMSEA = 0.08	Supported

**Table 9.** Regression weights.

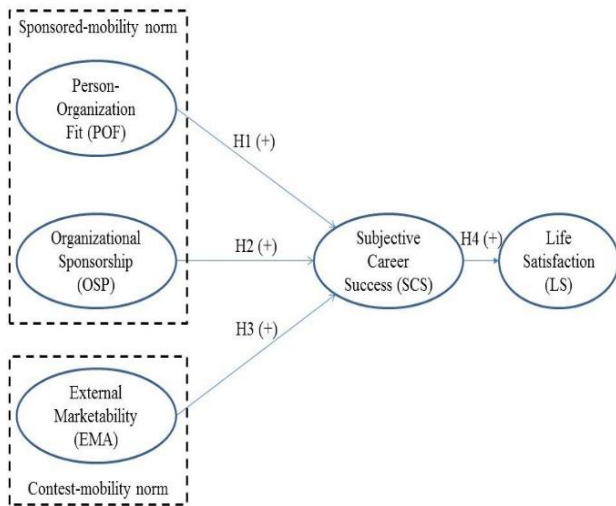
Hypotheses		Estimate	S.E.	C.R	P
Person-Organization Fit →	Subjective career success	0.172	0.137	1.259	0.208
Organizational Sponsorship →	Subjective career success	0.463	0.114	4.083	***
External Marketability - →	Subjective career success	0.169	0.082	2.049	0.04
Subjective career success →	Life Satisfaction	1.116	0.137	8.163	***

(\*\*\* means the value is smaller than 0.001)

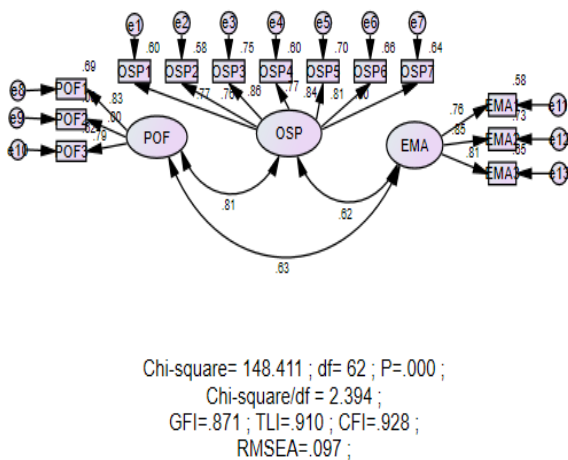
**Table 10.** Hypothesis testing results.

Hypothesis	P-value	Testing result
H1. Subjective person-organization fit is positively associated with subjective career success.	Over 0.05	Not supported
H2. Organizational sponsorship is positively associated with subjective career success.	Below 0.001	Strongly supported
H3. External marketability is positively associated with subjective career success.	Below 0.05	Supported
H4. Subjective career success is positively associated with life satisfaction.	Below 0.001	Strongly supported

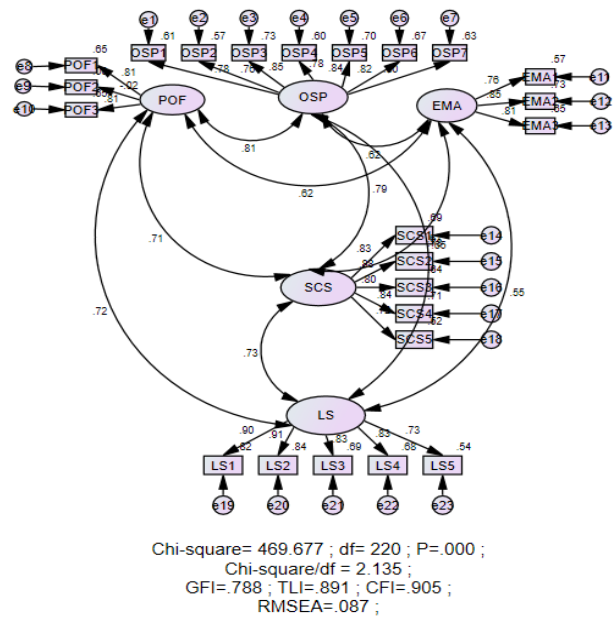
**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework.



**Figure 2.** CFA for subjective career success.



**Figure 3.** CFA for measurement model.



**Figure 4.** Structural results (standardized estimates).

