The Mediating Role of Career Satisfaction in the Relationship Between Perceived Organizational Support and Life Satisfaction in Millennials

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the mediating role of career satisfaction in the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and life satisfaction. This quantitative research study used the Satisfaction with Life Scale to measure life satisfaction, the short version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support to measure POS, and the Career Satisfaction Scale to measure career satisfaction. This study was conducted on employees who are part of the millennial generation (N = 107), which includes individuals aged 24-38 years old, and who had been working for a minimum of six months. The mediation analysis identified an insignificant direct effect (B = .03, SE = .12, $p >$ .71) and a significant indirect effect (B = .10, SE = .07, BCa CI [.03,.20]), with a medium effect size (k^2 = .13, BCa CI [.04,.24]). These results indicate that career satisfaction mediated the relationship between POS and life satisfaction. Therefore, companies should provide support that helps employees maintain their career satisfaction and feel satisfied with their lives.

Keywords: career satisfaction, life satisfaction, millennial generation, perceived organizational support.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the industrial and organizational field, improving happiness is important because it can affect an employee's performance at work (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2008). Huang, Ahlstrom, Lee, Chen, and Hsieh (2016) found that happy employees put more time and effort into completing their work. Happy employees also have lower absenteeism, a lower intention to leave, and higher innovation in the organization (Grawitch, Gottschalk & Munz, 2006). Employees' happiness is also considered to support organizational health, as indicated by high levels of performance and productivity (Singh, 2015). Therefore, organizations must pay attention to their employees' happiness, including millennial employees.

Happiness in millennial employees is important because they represent a growing proportion of the workplace. Millennials are estimated to comprise 50–60% of Indonesia's population in 2020 (Nursya'bani, 2016). Thus, they will comprise the majority of the workplace population as the previous generation retires. Stewart, Oliver, Cravens, and Oishi (2017) stated that millennials include

people born between 1981 and 1995 who were 24–38 years old in 2019.

Unfortunately, the 2019 Deloitte Millennial Survey found that 49%, or approximately 6,500 of 13,416 millennial employees from 42 countries, stated that they were unhappy at work and wanted to leave their jobs within the immediate two years (Friedman, 2019). In Indonesia, a survey conducted by JobStreet in 2016 found that 33.4%, or approximately 6,000 millennial survey participants aged 22–26 years with 1–4 years of work experience, were unhappy at work (Khoiri, 2016). These findings indicate that there is potential for unhappiness in millennial employees, which will result in reduced productivity. To obtain optimal performance from millennials who will soon become the majority workforce in Indonesia, understanding how to increase their happiness is necessary.

Happiness itself can be conceptualized as life satisfaction (Ng, 2015). Life satisfaction is an important component of happiness that affects psychological, behavioral, and social aspects (Diener, 1984). Pavot and Diener (1993) stated that life satisfaction is a process of assessing quality of life in general based on various criteria chosen by an individual. Individuals who have high life satisfaction are satisfied with what they have, have living conditions that are considered close to ideal, and do not have regrets (Pavot & Diener, 1993). The authors chose life satisfaction to measure happiness because it is a major indicator of individual happiness and can be measured independently (Diener & Diener, 1995). Furthermore, Eid and Diener (2004) stated that life satisfaction is a more stable component for describing happiness

compared to positive and negative affect. Individuals who are satisfied with their life also tend to care about their social relationships, quality of health (Diener & Ryan, 2009) and quality of mental health (Fergusson et al., 2015) and generally have good productivity (Huang et al., 2016; Singh, 2015) and motivation (Grawitch et al., 2006; Rode, Rehg, Near, & Underhill, 2007). Thus, companies must maintain employee life satisfaction because its impact is felt by both the individual and the company where they work (Singh, 2015).

Millennials may have different priorities compared with other generations, so determining what threatens their life satisfaction might also differ. Research conducted by Martin (2005) showed that millennials are viewed as a high-maintenance generation that has a fast work pace, always looks for new opportunities and challenges at work, and wants to develop themselves. Millennials were also shown to have a high need for opportunities in career advancement through training and self-development (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010). However, millennials face issues of organizations failing to meet their needs in certain aspects, such as limited opportunities to develop careers, lack of incentives, and a rigid leadership style (Khoiri, 2016). Other factors that might not be in line with their expectations include the lack of freedom to use creativity and their optimal abilities and the limited availability of career paths (Breene, 2016; Korobka, 2015). Not fulfilling these expectations can cause millennials to feel unhappy at work and consequently leave their companies (Finch, 2015).

The discrepancies between millennials' desires and how they are treated in the workplace may form the perception that the company does not care about them, causing a low level of life satisfaction. These discrepancies can arise if the company does not consider the desires and values possessed by their employees. These discrepancies ultimately cause employees to feel they are not treated properly. Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) stated that the appropriate or inappropriate treatment provided by the company is an indicator of the extent to which the company values the employees' contribution and cares for their happiness. This assessment or perception is explained as perceived organizational support (POS).

Eisenberger et al. (1986) defined POS as an employee's belief that their company values their contribution and cares for their well-being. POS is associated with organizational support theory, which indicates the readiness of companies in providing for the needs and socio-emotional support for employees. A high POS is reported by employees who feel that their opinions are heard, their goals and values are considered, and they do not feel used by the company (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997).

Research conducted by Wojtkowska, Andersz, and Czarnota-Bojarska (2016) and Meyers et al. (2018) previously identified a correlation between POS and life satisfaction. However, research conducted by Newman, Nielsen, Smyth, and Hooke (2014) found no direct effect of POS on life satisfaction. The researchers assume that there are other variables that may act as mediators between POS and life satisfaction. In this study, career satisfaction was chosen as a mediator variable because it was considered relevant, particularly for millennial employees given their unique characteristics.

Millennials have been shown to place significant attention on their career satisfaction as a form of assessing their career development and advancement (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Laird, Harvey, & Lancaster, 2015; Lowe, Levitt, & Wilson, 2008; Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999). With their high-maintenance traits, they are always looking for new opportunities and challenges at work and asking companies to help maximize their potential (Martin, 2005). Furthermore, they consider a career to be not only a job but also a part of life that should include personal development and experiences (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010).

Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990) define career satisfaction as individual satisfaction derived from the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of a career, including all career goals, income, advancement, and career development. Employees who have high career satisfaction feel satisfied with their achievements, goals fulfillment, income, career advancement, and ability development during their career (Greenhaus et al., 1990). Millennials are found to emphasize career satisfaction as an assessment of their career development and progress (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Laird, Harvey, & Lancaster, 2015; Lowe, Levitt, & Wilson, 2008; Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999). With their high-maintenance characteristics, millennial employees also want a fast track to gain

power and responsibility; they are always looking for new opportunities and challenges at work and want the company to help them maximize themselves (Martin, 2005). Therefore, career satisfaction is important for millennial employees because they consider their career not only their daily work but also part of their life, which involves personal development and experiences gained from the job (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010).

Previously, career satisfaction was found to be related to POS. Armstrong-Stassen and Ursel (2009) found that supportive companies that provided opportunities for the development and acquisition of new skills managed to make employees feel satisfied in their careers. Karatepe (2012) also noted that other aspects of organizational support such as salary, career development, skills, and the achievement of goals can increase career satisfaction for employees. Thus, POS can shape employee perceptions of their careers through various policies aimed at supporting employees' careers.

Various studies have examined the relationship between career satisfaction and employees' life satisfaction. Lounsbury, Park, Sundstrom, Williamson, and Pemberton (2004) explained that life satisfaction in terms of happiness, well-being, and good quality of life can represent the overall experience of one's career. A similar finding was reported by Hagmaier, Abele, and Goebel (2018), who found that the influence of career satisfaction on life satisfaction was not only present during the time of the career but also remained for an additional seven to twelve years. Abele-Brehm (2014) also mentions career satisfaction and notes that the perception of career success has a

reciprocal relationship with life satisfaction.

Previous research on these three variables has been conducted by Joo and Lee (2017), who reported a mediating effect of career satisfaction on POS and life satisfaction. The results of their study indicated that when employees have a higher POS, they will be more attached to work, satisfied with their careers, and feel satisfied in life. However, that study was only conducted on employees over 30 years old and did not specify which generation was being studied, so no results specifically mentioned the influence of variables on the millennial generation. Research on specific generations is important to assess the various problems and challenges that companies will face with the characteristics of each generation (Sutton & Narz, 2007). Therefore, this study aimed to determine whether the same model is still applicable and whether there is different result if only millennials are evaluated.

The dynamics of the relationship between POS, career satisfaction, and life satisfaction can be explained using organizational support theory (OST). Eisenberger et al. (1986) explained that companies can provide various forms of support that fulfill socio-emotional needs and make employees happy. This theory focuses on the various types of support provided by companies and their impact on employee happiness. The core of this theory is POS, which is the belief of employees that the company they work for values their contributions and cares for their happiness. POS is an indicator of the extent to which the company can fulfill the socio-emotional needs of employees such as self-esteem, approval, and attachment to

reduce work pressure and increase happiness (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). This theory also emphasizes that the support provided by companies must meet the desired criteria by employees and be meaningful for them (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

As a high-maintenance generation, millennials look for new challenges at work and ask their companies for developmental opportunities (Martin, 2005), such as career development. To satisfy the needs of millennial employees, company should provide support for the indicators of career satisfaction such as achievement, income, advancement, and career development (Greenhaus et al., 1990). Heslin (2005) assumed that career satisfaction is the primary criterion for evaluating whether a company has given

adequate support, particularly through career development, which is embedded in some of the support given by the organization. By achieving career satisfaction, millennial employees feel that their company's support can also help them achieve life satisfaction. In this case, millennials will have high POS based on their positive views of companies supporting their career satisfaction through career advancement and development, and they will consequently have high life satisfaction (Joo & Lee, 2017). Therefore, the researchers established the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis:

Career satisfaction mediates the relationship between POS and life satisfaction.
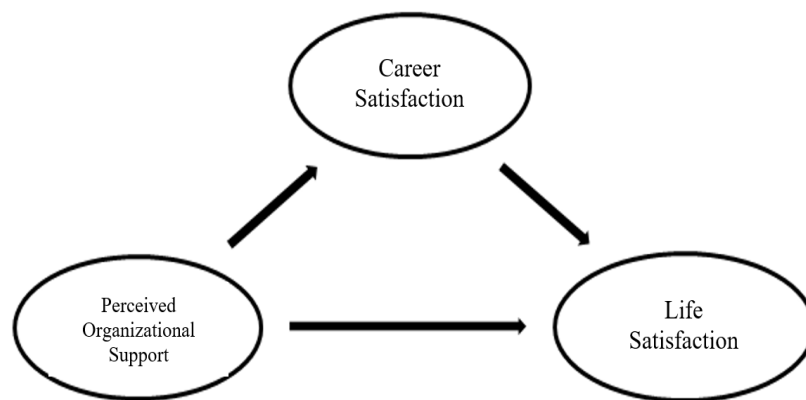

Figure 1. Research Model

2. METHODS

This correlational study examined the role of career satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between POS and life satisfaction. This study had a quantitative, cross-sectional, retrospective, and non-experimental design. A convenience sampling method was used. The data were collected online through a self-report

Likert-type scale questionnaire on the Google Form platform. Respondents were recruited through the author's friends, family, and colleagues using social media such as Line, Facebook, Whatsapp, and Instagram. The respondent inclusion criteria were as follows: an employee of 24–38 years old who had worked for a company for at least six months. The 107 respondents had an average age of 29.38

years (SD = 3.73). Most of the respondents were men (64 people; 59.8%) and had a monthly income between Rp 4,000,000 and Rp 7,900,000 (61 people; 57%).

POS was measured using a short version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 1997); the short version includes only 8 of the original 36 statements with answers reported on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Two of the eight items are unfavorable items. An example item is: "My company cares about my opinion."

Career satisfaction was measured using the Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS) created by Greenhaus et al. (1990). This measurement contains five statements that assess career satisfaction based on several aspects, such as career targets, income targets, and promotion targets. The respondents provide answers that describe their compatibility with a statement on a five-point Likert scale (1 = very inappropriate, 5 = very appropriate). An example item is: "I am satisfied with the

progress I have made to achieve all my career goals."

Life satisfaction was measured with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) created by Diener et al. (1985). This measurement instrument contains five statements that assess life satisfaction based on quality of life. Respondents can choose answers that indicate their agreement with statements on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). An example item is: "I am satisfied with my life." A reliability test using Cronbach's alpha showed that all of the measurement instruments had good reliability (SWLS = .87; SPOS = .79; CSS = .90).

3. RESULTS

Table 1 shows the results from the Pearson correlation analyses. Demographic variables that were associated with the main variables were controlled for because they could affect the results.

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Analysis on the Main Variables, Gender, Age, and Monthly Income

		M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1	Life Satisfaction	4.69	1.05	(.87)				
2	POS	4.82	.79	.16	(.79)			
3	Career Satisfaction	3.23	.84	.47**	.29*	(.90)		
4	Gender	-	-	-.08	-.05	.11	-	
5	Age	29.38	3.73	.32**	.03	.16	.15	-
6	Monthly Income	-	-	.24**	.02	.16	.23*	.57**

**significant, *p* <.01; *significant, *p* <.05; *N* = 107 Dummy coding was used for gender (1 = Male, 0 = Female) and monthly income (1 = less than Rp 4,000,000, 2 = Rp 4,000,000 to Rp 7,900,000, 3 = Rp 8,000,000 to Rp 11,900,000, 4 = Rp 12,000,000 to Rp 15,900,000, 5 = Rp 16,000,000 to Rp 20,000,000, 6 = above Rp 20,000,000)

Based on Table 1, POS (M = 4.82, SD =.79) was not significantly correlated with life satisfaction (M = 4.69, SD = 1.05) (r 16, p > .05). However, a significant positive correlation (r = 0.29, p < .05) was found between POS (M = 4.82, SD = .79) and career satisfaction (M = 3.23, SD =.84). Additionally, a significant positive correlation (r = .47, p < .01) was identified between career satisfaction (M = 3.23, SD = .84) and life satisfaction (M = 4.69, SD = 1.05).

An analysis of the demographic variables of the respondents showed that the age of the employees (M = 29.38, SD = 3.73) was significantly positively correlated (r = .32, p < .01) with life satisfaction (M = 4.69, SD = 1.05). Monthly income (M = 2.50, SD = 1.17) was also significantly positively correlated (r = .24, p = .01) with life satisfaction (M = 4.69, SD = 1.05). However, gender and life satisfaction were not significantly correlated. Therefore, the researchers only included age and monthly income as covariates because these variables can affect the mediating power of career satisfaction on the relationship between POS and life satisfaction. A mediation analysis using PROCESS (Model 4) was conducted to test the research hypothesis by evaluating the confident intervals (CIs) from the bootstrap analysis results of 5,000 samples. In this analysis, the researchers controlled for demographic variables such as gender, age, and monthly income because the previous analyses demonstrated that these variables were associated with life satisfaction. The results of the mediation analysis are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Mediation Analysis of Career Satisfaction in the Relationship between POS and Life Satisfaction

	Outcome variables					
	Career Satisfaction			Life Satisfaction		
	B	SE	t	B	SE	T
Career Satisfaction	-	-	-	.52**	.11	4.67
POS	.30**	.10	3.07	.04	.12	.38
Age	-	-	-	.06*	.03	2.20
Monthly income	-	-	-	.04	.09	.46
Constant	1.01	.80	1.26	1.35	.99	1.36
	$R^2 = .11$			$R^2 = .28$		

* Significant at p < .05
** Significant at p < .01

The results in Table 2 indicate that there was a significant positive relationship between POS and career satisfaction (a = .30, SE = .10, p < .01). Additionally, 11% of the variance in career

satisfaction could be explained by POS. Furthermore, career satisfaction had a significant positive effect on life satisfaction (b = .52, SE = .11, p < .01). However, POS did not have a significant effect on life satisfaction (c '= .04, SE = .12, p = .10). Age had a significant positive effect on life satisfaction (B = .06, SE = .03, p = .02) whereas monthly

income did not (B = .04, SE = .09, p = .42). As much as 28% of the variance in life satisfaction can be explained simultaneously by POS variables, career satisfaction, age, and monthly income. The mediation analysis comparing the total effects, direct and indirect effects on POS variables, career satisfaction, and life satisfaction is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Analysis of the Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects of POS on Life Satisfaction

	Total Effect of POS on Life Satisfaction			
Life Satisfaction	B	SE	T	*P*
	.20	.12	1.64	.10
	Direct Effect of POS on Life Satisfaction			
Life Satisfaction	B	SE	T	*P*
	.04	.12	.38	.71
	Indirect Effect of POS on Life Satisfaction			
Life Satisfaction	B	SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
	.16	.07	.05	.32
	k^2 =.13, BCa CI [.04,.24]			

The results from Table 3 show that there was no significant total effect of POS on life satisfaction (c = .20, p = .10). However, there was a significant indirect effect of POS on life satisfaction mediated by career satisfaction (ab = .16, BootLLCI

= .05, BootULCI = .32). Furthermore, 13% of the variance in life satisfaction can be explained by the mediation of career satisfaction on POS. The mediation analysis using model 4 of PROCESS is shown in Figure 2.
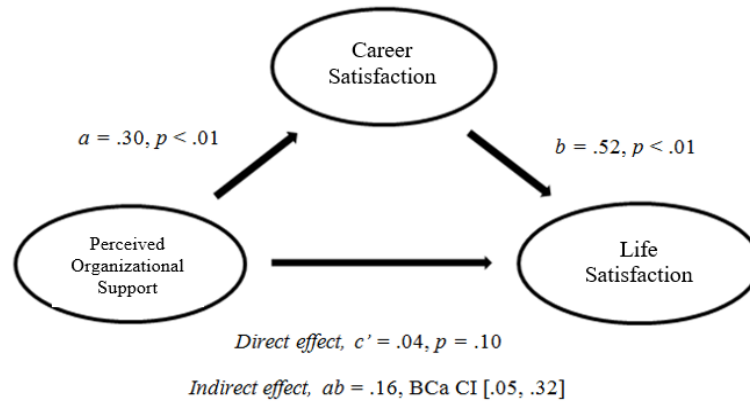
$a = .30, p < .01$

$b = .52, p < .01$

Career Satisfaction

Perceived Organizational Support

Life Satisfaction

Direct effect, c' = .04, p = .10

Indirect effect, ab = .16, BCa CI [.05, .32]

Figure 2. Results of the Mediation Analysis (Mediation Model 4)

4. DISCUSSION

The results supported the hypothesis that career satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationship between POS and life satisfaction. Consistent with previous studies, POS was found to be correlated with career satisfaction (Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009; Erdogan, Kraimer, & Liden, 2004; Karatepe, 2012). Companies that provide support through salaries, career development, and new skills acquisition can help employees feel satisfied with their careers. More specifically, Yean and Yahya (2013) explained that some forms of company support such as compensation (attractive rewards) and performance appraisal will make employees feel that their company has a strategy to increase their career satisfaction.

Consistent with our presumption, employees who feel supported by their organization also feel satisfied with their careers, which then contributes to their life satisfaction. Because millennials are high-maintenance, they have high expectations for their companies (Martin, 2005; Naim & Lenka, 2017). Additionally, millennials are very concerned with career development and advancement (De Hauw

& De Vos, 2010; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Laird et al., 2015; Lowe et al., 2008; Martin, 2005), which can be the criterion millennials use to assess whether the company really supports them. This study noted that organizational support does not have a direct effect on life satisfaction, but it does have an indirect effect mediated by career satisfaction, which was valuable for millennial employees.

Unlike the previous study by Joo and Lee (2017), which investigated the effects of POS and psychological capital on work engagement, career satisfaction, and life satisfaction, our research only focused on the effect of POS on life satisfaction as mediated by career satisfaction. Nevertheless, both studies concluded that there is a mediating role of career satisfaction in the relationship between POS and life satisfaction. Our study found that 24- to 38-year-old employees, who make up the millennial generation, consider their career an important part of work and life. Therefore, the model is still relevant even if the sample is specific to millennials and not mixed with other generations.

However, the current study cannot explain whether this model will also hold true if the sample only evaluates older generations. Future studies are necessary to determine whether POS also predicts life satisfaction through career satisfaction or whether other variables serve as better mediators than career satisfaction.

The analysis of age identified an uneven distribution in the ages of participants, which may have influenced the results of this study, and particularly why POS does not have a direct role in life satisfaction. A total of 73% of the respondents (79 people) were 24–31 years old, and thus they had a greater influence on the results than the 27% of respondents (28 people) aged 32–38 years old. The theory of career development groups the age range of 24–31 years into a trial phase; thus, these participants may change jobs several times before finding a suitable job, mostly because of dissatisfaction with their work (Super & Jordaan, 1973). Mathis and Jackson (2011) also group these ages into early career stages during which employees are still determining their main interests and exploring various jobs.

Additionally, POS may not have a direct effect on life satisfaction because there may be other factors that are more influential on life satisfaction, such as a proactive personality. The proactive personality possessed by millennials is demonstrated by their lack of hesitation to leave a company to continue exploring other jobs or to look for companies that they prefer (Mathis & Jackson, 2011). With their high desire to explore their interests, a proactive personality may be a more important variable for increasing life satisfaction than POS. This is assumed to occur because millennials prefer to explore

their career independently rather than relying on the support of companies that may not necessarily be their permanent companies.

This study found that the effect size in the relationship between POS and life satisfaction was only 2.5%, which is considered a small effect; this finding indicates that 97.5% of the variance was not explained by POS. This low effect size is thought to be influenced by the nature of millennials, who frequently change jobs and thus do not view organizational support as important. It may also explain why the relationship between POS and life satisfaction was insignificant.

This study's limitations must be considered when determining the implications of the findings. First, this study only used career satisfaction as a criterion for increasing employee life satisfaction. According to the OST, another criterion influencing employees' views on a company is the fulfillment of socio-emotional needs. This study did not measure personal aspects as factors that can affect life satisfaction. Lu (1999) mentions that overlapping traits and events in life can affect a person's assessment of his quality of life. A person's life satisfaction can change at any time depending on the events that occur in the environment based on self-assessment, so measuring traits should help complete this gap in the research. The lack of socio-emotional and trait factor measurements makes this research less comprehensive in explaining life satisfaction. Future studies should consider the effects of traits that might be connected to millennials, such as a proactive personality, on life satisfaction.

Second, the respondents in this study came from various companies with different industry classifications. Industry classification is defined as the main focus or basis of the establishment of a company such as mining, construction, the supply of resources, financial management, and others. This study also did not consider the types of companies, such as start-ups, corporations, etc. For example, Hadijah (2017) differentiates some of the benefits of working in start-up companies versus corporations, particularly those directly related to career satisfaction. Start-up companies generally provide salaries that tend to be quite low and limited bonuses for work performance. Conversely, corporations that are more financially established can provide higher salaries and bonuses for their employees. Although start-ups can provide good opportunities for individuals to develop themselves and their careers, established corporate companies have clear career paths compared with start-up companies. The difference between the two types of companies indicates that employees of corporate companies have different opportunities compared with start-up employees for obtaining organizational support; thus, it is difficult to generalize the results of this study to all employees from different companies. It is possible that employees from different classifications and types of companies have different assessments on the quality of their careers based on the advantages or disadvantages they receive from their companies. Furthermore, company differences may cause employees to view their careers differently.

Third, this study used a cross-sectional method that measured all variables at a single point in time. Cross-sectional methods cannot explain the dynamics of relationships between variables over time. Cross-sectional methods also have the potential to be affected by various factors that occur only when completing the questionnaire, such as other external variables that can influence the results of the study. Additionally, this study cannot determine the direction of cause-effect relationships between POS, career satisfaction, and life satisfaction.

Fourth, all variables were measured simultaneously, and only one method of data collection, a self-report, was used for all variables included in this study. This could potentially cause common method bias and influence the magnitude of the coefficient of each variable (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Furthermore, measuring variables simultaneously might provide common contextual cues that influence the retrieval of information from memory and affect how respondents choose their answers (Podsakoff et al., 2003). There is also a risk of social desirability bias when using self-report questionnaires. Respondents might tend to assess themselves in too positive a manner and choose the answer that looks good and complies with certain norms (Tehseen, Ramayah & Sajilan, 2017). Eventually, these biases could lead to the respondents completing the questionnaires with answers that do not reflect their true feelings regarding the question. In this study, the respondents were assured that their responses would be anonymous, and they were asked to complete the questionnaire candidly. Future studies should also use a method to control common method bias as advised by Podsakoff et al. (2003), such as

providing time lags or measurement separation when measuring predictor variables and outcome variables. Furthermore, future studies should consider adding objective data such as human resources practices that can facilitate respondents' career development.

Fifth, although the mediation model had an effect size that was classified as medium (13%), the statistical power of this study was relatively weak due to the uneven distribution of participants by age and the lack of control over the industrial classification of the included companies. To better generalize the results of this study in individuals with different characteristics and different organization

cultures, more respondents should be included to better represent the population. Weak statistical power can also cause the results to be inconsistent. The significance between variables may change if the total number of respondents decreases even by small amounts.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of this study support the proposed hypothesis that career satisfaction mediates the relationship between PSO and life satisfaction. Therefore, companies must provide support to develop employees' abilities and careers for them to be satisfied with their careers and life in general.

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