



# Does Gender Matter in the Relationship Between Individual Absorptive Capacity and Subjectivity Career Success?

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**Abstract.** Some scholars argue that career experience in the workplace owned by men and women is different [9] caused by various factors. Hence, it may result in differences in the individual assessment of career success. This study aims to analyze the relationship between Networking Behavior on Subjective Career Success mediated by Individual Absorptive Capacity and moderated by gender. This study was conducted at Universitas Sumatera Utara, located in Medan, the sample in this study was 103 active lecturers. The hypothesis was tested by using the Structural Equation Model (SEM). The study results illustrate that Individual Absorptive Capacity mediated the relationship between Networking Behaviors and Subjective Career Success. The results also show that gender moderates the relationship between Networking Behavior to Subjective Career Success and Individual Absorptive Capacity to Subjective Career Success.

**Keywords:** Networking behavior · Individual absorptive capacity · Subjective career success · Gender

## 1 Introduction

Nowadays, career success is focused on individual responsibilities, not only based on salary or promotion but also on psychological success, which is a feeling of pride for personal achievement [1]. Individuals are no longer entirely dependent on the organization to achieve psychological satisfaction with their careers but proactively manage their careers and determine themselves by developing their resources.

Networking behavior (NB) can be considered as an individual antecedent to creating social networks associated with subjective career success (SCS) [2]. Networking behavior is the behavior of building networking that is directed toward achieving career success [3]. Previous research has shown that several forms of networking, a series of individual relationships between internal and external organizations, can affect career success [4, 5]. However, earlier studies have shown inconsistent results between networking behavior and subjective career success [6, 7], which gives the opportunities for other researchers to conduct further studies regarding the research gap between NB and SCS.

The study of career success associated with gender has been discussed earlier [8]. Some experts argue that career experiences in the workplace are different between females and males [9, 10], which is caused by various factors. Objectively, career success for female and male academics at universities is not highly distinctive. There is a lot of job accomplishment in the highest positions such as professors and other important positions at the university irrespective of gender differences. However, subjective career success might have differences for females and males. Females may be easier to achieve satisfaction with their careers than males. Males generally have more expectations of their careers regarding opportunities and career achievements [11].

The characteristics of networking behavior are important for upgrading females and males to a higher level [12]. Career success for males, such as promotions related to utilizing networks, is stronger than for females [13].

Females have a historical lack of access to important people in the company [14]. Therefore, the role of networking behavior for females is essential, since NB can be benefited as a strategy to increase access to important people, which will be advantageous for career success. Hence, it is necessary to understand the benefits of NB for both females and males. Then, it is indeed important to examine the role of gender as a moderator between NB and SCS.

Logically, when an individual has an absorptive capacity, the individual will be able to use the information and knowledge to achieve their desired career success. Individual absorptive capacity has often been considered an important factor in explaining competitive advantage, company performance, and innovation at the company level, as well as innovative working behavior and employee performance [15]. No specific study has discussed the relationship between individual absorptive capacity and subjective career success. IAC, which leads to career growth, allows employees to obtain and utilize new knowledge and renew the existing knowledge. According to the mobility contest theory of career success [16], only employees with a strong individual ability will win the competition and achieve their desired career outcomes in a modern career perspective. Therefore, it is proposed that IAC has the potential to mediate the relationship between NB and SCS.

Furthermore, IAC is assumed to have a difference between females and males. Gender differences are often associated with the ability to process information received by individuals; females and males tend to have different life experiences, which will distinguish their knowledge [17]. Differences in the ability to process this information will undoubtedly have an impact on subjective career success. Thus, it can be stated that gender is the moderator of IAC and SCS.

## 1.1 Networking Behavior

Networking is a collection of behaviors that are motivated by a goal and directed toward that goal. Treadway et al. [18] divide networking behavior into two categories: career-based and community-based. Maintaining external contact (a relationship with someone), socializing, participating in professional activities, and enhancing internal exposure are all examples of career-based networking. Participation in community events is referred to as community-based networking activity.

## 1.2 Individual Absorptive Capacity

Absorptive capacity was originally defined by Cohen and Levinthal [19] as the ability to identify new external knowledge and assimilate and apply it for commercial goals. In contrast, according to Todorova and Durisin [20], the ability to recognize the value of external knowledge is the extent to which an individual will develop a cognitive map to be able to do assimilation (absorption) [21].

Absorptive capacity is related to the company's ability to take advantage of external knowledge through exploration, transformative, and exploitative learning [22]. However, Cohen and Levinthal [19] stated that absorptive capacity at the organizational level recognizes that absorptive capacity is based on the individual level. Individual absorptive capacity is the ability of individuals to recognize and obtain valuable knowledge, digest it, and use it for their interests [23].

## 1.3 Subjective Career Success

The goal of career success is to obtain visible career achievements, such as a higher income or a promotion. Subjective professional success, on the other hand, is linked to less obvious career accomplishments including work satisfaction and career satisfaction [24]. Internal factors such as one's interpretation, perspective, and achievement appraisal at work all play a role in subjective career success [25, 26].

A career, according to Hall [27], is a set of attitudes and behaviors that people have towards their job experiences and activities throughout their lives. Trends in career success are based on dynamic changes in the business environment [28, 29]. Career success that was generally judged objectively later shifted to subjective career success, which was assessed based on employee perceptions and feelings about their careers [25, 30].

According to prior study [31], there are three requirements for career advancement in the Chinese context: (a) addressing inner psychology demands like achievement, autonomy, and excitement; (b) work-life balance; and (c) extrinsic rewards like monetary or material recompense. The first aspect is intrinsic fulfillment, which includes representing individual career goals using their talents and achieving their ideals in their jobs [31]. Individuals with this type of intrinsic drive view their job development as thrilling and fun, according to self-determination [32].

## 1.4 Networking Behaviour, Individual Absorptive Capacity, and Subjective Career Success

Based on Forret and Dougherty [3], the dimensions of networking behavior consist of socializing, maintaining contact (relationships with someone) internally, being involved in professional networks, increasing internal visibility, and participating in community activities. The networking behavior activities allow employees to obtain information and knowledge both from inside and outside the organization.

Hence, the higher the networking behavior possessed by individuals, the greater the opportunities for the individual to get the information or knowledge needed by

individuals, which allows individuals to absorb continuously, digest, renew knowledge, and take advantage of knowledge for their interests [23].

Previous research reviews the relationship between networking behavior and subjective career success through individual absorptive capacity. Networking behavior allows an individual to gain valuable information for their career. Especially if the information obtained is unique, only possessed by the individual from networking, whether in the occupational, formal, or informal networking.

In addition, when an individual has networking behavior, the individual will have the opportunity to share social resources such as colleagues, superiors, professional groups outside the office, and also the general public which will then be absorbed and utilized for the benefit of individuals to increase their subjective career success, namely a sense of personal achievement compared with other people or according to the standards he has set.

H1: Individual Absorptive Capacity Mediates the Relationship Between Networking behavior and Subjective Career Success.

## 1.5 Gender as a Moderating Variable

Forret and Dougherty [3] stated that gender is related to each NB dimension, such as maintaining contacts, socializing, engaging in professional activities, participating in communities, and internal visibility increases. By having a Networking Behavior, females have access to a higher position in the organization. Based on Parker and Fagenson [33], to win promotions in organizations, females must be able to penetrate networks. Flood [34] said that to maintain his dominant position, males tend not to include females in networking groups, even in informal interactions that will be able to improve female's careers. The results show that males occupy a more important position in the organization's network and are considered more influential and powerful than females.

The lack of females in the circle of power organizations leaves females behind. Therefore, females are obliged to have networking behavior if they want to succeed in the career they want. There is no doubt that networking behavior is very important for females and males and even more important for females to penetrate organizational boundaries in career achievement. Qureshi and Saleem [35] revealed that gender is proven to moderate several dimensions of networking behavior towards career development, such as maintaining contact and increase and internal visibility.

Haas [36] argued that the ability of individuals to absorb information is related to gender differences. Because males and females have different life experiences, which will certainly distinguish the knowledge they have [17]. In addition, when viewed from the social context, males and females have different social roles, thus creating a tendency to think and act quite differently in the context of work. Cohen and Levinthal [19] even stated that differences in the background would strengthen the basis of learning to enrich existing knowledge. Of course, the difference in the level of absorption of individuals will have an impact on the success of a subjective career.

H2: Gender moderates the relationship between Networking Behavior to Subjective Career Success.

H3: Gender moderates the relationship of Individual Absorptive Capacity to Subjective Career Success.

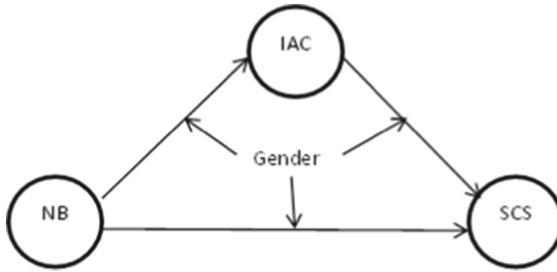


Fig. 1. Research Model

## 2 Research Methods

Universitas Sumatera Utara conducted the research. In this study, 103 active lecturers with civil servant status were used as the sample. Loading Factor and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were used to test the model’s validity and fit. In this work, the Structural Equation Model (SEM) method was utilized to assess the hypotheses and variables of moderators (Fig. 1).

All of the study’s measurements used a 5-point Likert scale with 1 for strongly disagreed and 5 for strongly agreed. All sizes used were adapted from existing literature and have been found to have good reliability and validity. NB was assessed based on Occupational Networking, Formal Community Networking, and Informal Community Networking developed with new measurements adapted from Gibson [37] and Wolff and Spurk [38]. IAC was assessed based on recognizing the value of knowledge and the ability to assimilate knowledge adapted from Cohen Levinthal [19]. Subjective career success was measured by perceived career success, job satisfaction, and external marketability, developed by Spurk et al. [39].

## 3 Results and Discussion

Table 1 demonstrates that all loading factor values are more than 0.7, indicating that the loading factor meets the validity requirement. The validity testing is then performed using the average variance extracted (AVE) value.

The AVE value that should be used is more than 0.5 [40]. All AVE values are greater than 0.5, suggesting that the AVE validity conditions are met. A reliability test was also performed using the composite reliability (CR) rating (Table 2).

A CR value of >0.7 is suggested [40]. All CR values are more than 0.7, suggesting that they have met the CR reliability criterion.

Above 0.7 is the optimum CA value [40]. All CA values are more than 0.7, indicating that they meet the Cronbach’s Alpha reliability criterion (Table 3).

Table 4 presents the results of the significant effect test.

Table 4 shows that: IAC has a positive effect on SCS with a path coefficient value of 0.424 (original sample column) and significantly with a P-value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ . NB has a positive effect on IAC with a path coefficient value of 0.208 (original sample column)

**Table 1.** Validity Test

	Avg. Variance Extracted
Individual Absorptive Capacity	0.812
Subjective Career Success	0.854
Networking Behavior	0.893

**Table 2.** Reliability Test

	Composite Reliability
Individual Absorptive Capacity	0.963
Subjective Career Success	0.972
Networking Behavior	0.987

**Table 3.** Reliability Test based on Cronbach's alpha

	Cronbach's Alpha
Individual Absorptive Capacity	0.953
Subjective Career Success	0.965
Networking Behavior	0.985

**Table 4.** Significance Effect Test (Bootstrapping)

	Original Sample (O)	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (STDEV)	T Stat. (IO/STDEV)	P Value
IAC → SCS	0.424	0.434	0.103	4.124	0.000
NB → IAC	0.208	0.238	0.066	3.167	0.002
NB → SCS	0.147	0.150	0.139	1.055	0.292

and significantly with a P-value of  $0.002 < 0.05$ . NB has a positive effect on KRS with a path coefficient value of 0.147 (original sample column), but not significantly with a P-value of  $0.292 > 0.05$ .

Table 5 shows that: The determination coefficient value (r-squared) of IAC is 0.043. The value can be interpreted that the effect of NB on IAC is 4.3%. The coefficient of

**Table 5.** Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

	R Square
Individual Absorptive Capacity	0.043
Subjective Career Success	0.254

**Table 6.** Mediation Testing

	Original Sample (O)	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (STDEV)	T Stat (O/STDEV)	P-Value
NB → IAC → SCS	0.232	0.232	0.109	2.139	0.033

**Table 7.** Moderator Testing

	Original Sample (O)	P-Value	Males P-Value	Females P-Value
NB* Gender → SCS	0.262	0.049	0.686	0.006
IAC* Gender → SCS	-0.263	0.029	0.000	0.251

determination (r-square) of SCS is 0.254. The value can be interpreted that the influence of NB and IAC on SCS is 25.4%.

With a P-value of 0.033 0.05, Table 6 reveals that individual absorptive capacity is an important mediator of the association between networking behavior and subjective professional success.

Table 7 demonstrates that, with a P-value of 0.049 0.05, gender moderates the connection between networking activities and subjective career success. Therefore, this shows that females have stronger relationships than males, with a p-value of 0.006. Gender moderates the relationship between individual absorptive capacity, and subjective career success, with a P-value of 0.029 < 0.05. Therefore, this shows that males have stronger relationships than females, with a p-value of 0.000.

## 4 Conclusion

Individual absorptive capacity has been shown to mediate between networking behavior and subjective job success, according to the findings. This highlights how networking enables people to obtain information and knowledge from both within and outside the company. Thus, the higher the networking behavior, the greater the possibility of employees renewing, absorbing usefully, and utilizing knowledge. The greater the opportunity of employees to achieve the expected career success. The results of this study confirm

that IAC is an important factor in bridging the relationship between NB and SCS and enriching the study of NB and SCS.

The association between networking behavior and subjective career success is found to be moderated by gender. The most interesting finding of this research is that females are more engaged in networking behavior than males. It indicates that females tend to have a stronger NB than males. Additionally, it explains that females are more proficient in formal, informal, and occupational networking, accelerating career satisfaction. In the university academic condition, females are more capable and flexible in establishing networks with both females and males. Therefore, the possibility of females excelling and accomplishing subjective career success is higher.

Furthermore, gender moderates the association between individual absorptive capacity and subjective professional success, according to this study. It illustrates that males play a major role in moderating IAC against SCS. Males tend to have more robust learning and absorbing abilities than females. Like academics, males are more likely proactive in searching for important information and knowledge and assimilating it for career success.

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