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Enhancing Subjective Career Success Among Private University Academics: The Roles of Perceived Organizational Support, Proactive Personality, and Work Engagement

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Abstract

This study aims to develop and empirically test a conceptual model explaining the determinants of subjective career success among academics in private universities in Indonesia. Drawing on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and insights from the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory, proactive personality is conceptualized as a personal resource representing person input and perceived organizational support as a contextual resource that influence career outcomes. In this framework, work engagement is proposed as a key motivational mechanism through which personal and organizational resources are translated into subjective career success. A quantitative research design was employed using a survey method administered to full-time academics at private higher education institutions across Indonesia. Data were collected from 278 respondents and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS version 4. The results indicate that proactive personality and perceived organizational support exert positive and significant effects on subjective career success. Furthermore, work engagement partially mediates the relationships between proactive personality and subjective career success, as well as between perceived organizational support and subjective career success. These findings suggest that the availability of personal and organizational resources plays a critical role in shaping academics' subjective career experiences. From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the application of SCCT by integrating motivational insights from JD-R theory, demonstrating how personal resources (proactive personality) and contextual supports (perceived organizational support) influence career outcomes through work engagement as a psychological mechanism. Practically, the findings offer insights for private university management in designing faculty development policies that foster work engagement and enhance subjective career success.

Keywords: Subjective Career Success, Proactive Personality, Perceived Organizational Support, Work Engagement, Private Higher Education

1. Introduction

The enhancement of national competitiveness is closely linked to the quality of human capital produced through higher education systems [1], [2], [3]. In the global knowledge economy, universities play a strategic role not only in producing skilled graduates but also in fostering research, innovation, and intellectual capital that support sustainable economic and social development [4], [5], [6], [7]. As global academic mobility and international research collaboration continue to intensify, higher education institutions are increasingly required to maintain high levels of academic productivity and institutional performance [8], [9]. In this context, academics constitute the central human capital responsible for advancing universities' teaching, research, and knowledge dissemination functions.

In Indonesia, both public and private higher education institutions are entrusted with the strategic mandate to implement the Three Pillars of Higher Education (Education, Research, and Community Service), widely known as *Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi* [10], [11]. The successful implementation of these missions largely depends on the performance and career development of academics as the primary actors in academic processes and knowledge production. Therefore, the sustainability and quality of academic careers have become critical issues in higher education management [12], [13]. Understanding how academics perceive the quality and success of their careers is thus increasingly important for both institutional performance and the broader development of the higher education system.

The modern career literature states that career success can be measured through objective indicators such as promotion, position, or income [14]. In detail, some studies (e.g., [15], [16]) note the importance of subjective dimensions that reflect

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individuals' evaluations of career satisfaction, achievement, and meaningfulness. In addition, Park et al. [17] further reinforces that subjective career success (SCS) constitutes a legitimate and substantive psychological outcome, rather than merely a supplementary aspect of objective success. In the academic context, subjective dimensions become increasingly salient given the limited opportunities for structural mobility and the protracted process of advancement in academic ranks. The complexity of Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi also places academics under high and multidimensional work pressure. Under such conditions, SCS emerges as a determinant indicator for capturing a more comprehensive understanding of the quality of academics' career experiences

The majority of academics in Indonesia remain concentrated in the early and mid-level ranks, while the proportion attaining the levels of Associate Professor (*Lektor Kepala*) and Professor is relatively limited. National higher education statistics indicate that professors constitute only about 1% of the total academic workforce, while Associate Professors account for approximately 5%. This phenomenon indicates the potential for structural career stagnation among a substantial segment of academics. Under such conditions, subjective career success becomes critical, as it is directly associated with work attitudes and the sustainability of the academic profession. Previous studies (e.g., [18], [19], [20]) have demonstrated that SCS influences work motivation, work engagement, and intentions to remain within the organization. However, empirical research examining the psychological factors that shape academics' SCS within the context of Indonesian higher education remains relatively scarce. This gap underlines the need for further exploration of the determinants of SCS within specific local and institutional contexts.

In line with the development of contemporary career theory, scholarly attention has shifted beyond an exclusive focus on organizational factors to encompass individuals' personal characteristics [21]. Proactive personality has emerged as a widely examined personal construct, as it reflects individuals' tendencies to take initiative and actively influence their work environments [22], [23]. Academics with a proactive personality are more engage in research development, scholarly collaboration, and pedagogical innovation [24]. Several studies have identified a positive relationship between proactive personality and career success [25], [26]. Nevertheless, inconsistent findings have also been reported in several studies[27], [28], which raises need of mediating mechanisms that have been overlooked by prior studies.

Beyond personal characteristics, perceived organizational support (POS) also plays a significant role in shaping individuals' career experiences. POS refers to the extent to which employees believe that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being [29]. In higher education settings, organizational support can be reflected in faculty development policies, fair promotion procedures, and the availability of academic resources. Prior research indicates that POS is positively associated with career satisfaction and career success [30], [31], [32]. However, the psychological mechanisms underlying this relationship remain underexplored, particularly within non-western contexts and the academic sector [33]. This limitation highlights the opportunity to develop more integrative conceptual models.

Grounded in SCCT, work engagement can be understood as a psychological process that links personal and organizational resources to individuals' subjective evaluations of career outcomes [34]. Work engagement, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in one's work, has the potential to serve as a key mechanism in explaining the formation of SCS [35], [36]. Previous works indicate that individuals with higher levels of work engagement tend to evaluate their careers more positively [37], [38]. However, the mediating role of work engagement in the relationships between proactive personality, perceived organizational support, and academics' SCS remains underexplored. Accordingly, this study offers new insights by integrating these three constructs within a single conceptual model. Theoretically, this research will extend the application of SCCT in the context of higher education in developing countries, while, practically, it provides an empirical foundation for private higher education administrators in designing sustainable academic development policies aligned with the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDG-4).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Subjective Career Success

Subjective career success is defined as the extent to which individuals feel satisfied with their career paths and achievements [16]. It reflects internal evaluations, including feelings of satisfaction, pride, and meaningfulness, as well as the alignment between career experiences and personal goals, values, and aspirations [17]. Cheng et al. [39] further suggest that subjective career success integrates both cognitive evaluations and affective responses to one's career trajectory. Although it represents a broad construct, prior studies commonly operationalize it through career satisfaction, which remains the most widely used indicator in empirical research [40], [41], [42].

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Within the academic context, subjective career success is particularly salient due to the long, complex, and highly structured nature of academic career trajectories [43], [44]. Advancement across academic ranks requires meeting extensive administrative and scholarly requirements, often resulting in a significant time lag between effort and outcomes. These conditions may lead to uncertainty and psychological strain throughout academics' career journeys [45], [46]. As a result, perceptions of career satisfaction and meaningfulness play a crucial role in shaping work attitudes, motivation, and professional engagement. Prior studies show that subjective career evaluations are strongly linked to commitment, well-being, and sustainable academic performance [43], [47]. Therefore, subjective career success is an essential construct for understanding academic career dynamics beyond formal structural achievements.

2.1. Proactive Personality

Proactive personality is a dispositional trait reflecting individuals' inclination to take initiative, identify opportunities, and shape their work environments to achieve career goals [48], [49], [50]. Such individuals are future-oriented, challenge the status quo, and consistently pursue self-improvement and workplace enhancement [51], [52], [53]. Within Lent et al.'s *SCCT*, proactive personality functions as a personal input influencing cognitive and affective processes in career decision-making and self-management [54]. Proactive individuals tend to form positive outcome expectations, set ambitious career goals, and actively seek opportunities for advancement, thereby engaging more intensively in developmental behaviours and fostering favourable evaluations of career progress. Consequently, proactive personality may enhance subjective career success through SCCT-related cognitive mechanisms

Preliminary studies indicate that proactive personality fosters self-efficacy, goal regulation, and adaptive strategies in addressing career demands, thereby serving as a personal resource that supports career development and satisfaction [42], [49], [55], [56]. Seibert et al. [23] further highlight that proactive individuals deliberately build competencies, expand networks, and create opportunities through goal-oriented actions. This aligns with SCCT, which views individuals not as passive recipients of environmental conditions but as active agents shaping their career trajectories.

Consistent with SCCT, proactive personality influences career success through self-regulation and sustained goal orientation [57], [58]. Proactive individuals typically set clear career goals, adopt flexible strategies, and remain dedicated to lifelong learning and skill development, which foster favourable cognitive and emotional evaluations of career experiences and enhance subjective career success [42]. Empirical studies confirm a positive association between proactive personality and subjective career success [26], [42]. Thus, within the SCCT framework [54], proactive personality can be conceptualised as a personal antecedent shaping career outcomes through purposeful, goal-directed psychological processes, providing a strong theoretical basis for examining its role in models of subjective career success.

2.2. Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organisational support (POS) refers to employees' belief that their organisation values their contributions and cares for their well-being, reflecting perceptions of commitment to socio-emotional needs [33], [59], [60]. From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, POS signals organisational treatment that activates reciprocity norms between employees and the organisation. When support is perceived as high, employees feel morally obliged to reciprocate through positive attitudes and behaviours, thereby establishing work relationships grounded in trust and reciprocity [29].

Perceived organizational support (POS) is shaped by organizational policies, managerial practices, and consistent fair treatment in the workplace. Within SCCT, such support functions as a contextual affordance influencing individuals' cognitive and affective processes in career management [54]. While Social Exchange Theory explains reciprocity through positive attitudes and behaviors, SCCT situates organizational support as a broader contextual resource shaping career-related cognitions and evaluations. Positive experiences of support enhance perceptions of control and confidence in career sustainability [61], [62], whereas low POS may act as a barrier to career development. Accordingly, POS operates as a significant environmental resource within the SCCT framework.

When employees perceive high levels of POS, they develop stronger psychological bonds with their organisation, reflected in belonging, trust, and emotional attachment [63], [64]. From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, these bonds result from long-term reciprocal exchanges between employees and the organisation [65]. Such relationships strengthen work attitudes and shape cognitive evaluations of career opportunities and prospects. Within SCCT, these positive evaluations enhance outcome expectations and career goal orientations, influencing how individuals assess career progress and success [66]. Integrating SET and SCCT thus clarifies how organisational support fosters psychological bonds that stimulate positive cognitive processes and shape career evaluations.

Perceived organisational support (POS) reflects organisational concern for employees' well-being and serves as a contextual resource fostering positive attitudes and engagement. Studies show that higher POS is linked to greater work

engagement, commitment, and stronger intentions to sustain long-term employment relationships [31], [32], [59], [67]. From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, these outcomes represent reciprocal responses to organisational support, while SCCT explains how such resources shape individuals' cognitive and motivational processes in career development. POS strengthens outcome expectations and career goal orientations, influencing evaluations of career progress and achievement [66]. Thus, integrating SET and SCCT provides a complementary explanation of POS as both a reciprocal exchange mechanism and a contextual resource facilitating adaptive psychological processes that shape career experiences and outcomes.

2.3. Work Engagement

Work engagement is a psychological state in which individuals invest their physical, cognitive, and emotional energies in performing professional roles [68]. It reflects active involvement that exceeds formal role requirements, characterised by strong cognitive focus and positive emotional attachment to tasks [69]. Engaged employees channel their efforts towards organisational objectives, indicating the extent of their psychological connection to work [35], [36].

In psychology, work engagement is defined as a positive and fulfilling work-related state[68]. It is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption, reflecting individuals' energy, enthusiasm, and concentration during tasks [68]. Engaged employees demonstrate resilience, pride, and deep involvement in their professional activities [70]. Unlike job satisfaction or mere presence at work, engagement entails sustained effort and focused involvement [70].

According to SCCT, work engagement operates as a psychological process linking personal and environmental resources to career outcomes [67]. It reflects how individuals interpret their work and direct energy towards career goals, with supportive conditions and positive traits enhancing engagement through stronger outcome expectations and goal regulation [71], [72]. In this way, engagement functions as an adaptive mechanism in career management and serves as a mediating construct within models of career success.

From a SET perspective, work engagement represents an affective and behavioural response to supportive organisational treatment [59], [73]. When employees perceive fairness, recognition, and support, they reciprocate with higher engagement [39], [59], [67], [73], which over time sustains employment relationships and shared goals. The JD-R model further posits that job resources such as autonomy, feedback, and social support enhance engagement, leading to greater job satisfaction, fulfilment, and career success [59]. Thus, work engagement is pivotal in linking organisational support to career outcomes, and the integration of SCCT, SET, and JD-R offers a robust theoretical foundation for understanding its role in work dynamics and career development.

2.4. Proactive Personality and Subjective Career Success

Individuals with proactive traits tend to experience higher levels of subjective career success because they actively take initiative to seek new opportunities, enhance their competencies, and adapt to changes in the work environment [25]. Proactive individuals are more likely to take responsibility for managing their own career development and to actively shape their work environments in ways that support their professional growth. Previous studies have shown that such proactive behaviors contribute to more favorable career outcomes and more positive evaluations of career progress [20], [27]. In addition, proactive personality reflects a dispositional tendency that enables individuals to pursue long-term goals and continuously improve their competencies, which ultimately supports their perception of career success [28], [51], [78]. Accordingly, proactive personality is expected to have a positive effect on subjective career success. Based on this reasoning, the first hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Proactive personality has a positive effect on subjective career success

2.5. Proactive Personality and Work Engagement

Proactive personality is a dispositional trait consistently shown associated with work engagement [74]. Individuals with a proactive personality tend to demonstrate initiative, engage in behaviors beyond their formal job requirements, and actively seek opportunities to create positive change in their work environments [75]. These proactive tendencies encourage individuals to become more deeply involved in their work activities. Previous studies have shown that proactive individuals are more likely to experience stronger levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption, which represent the core dimensions of work engagement [25], [76], [77], [78]. Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework by Bakker and Demerouti [79], individuals with proactive personalities can shape favorable working conditions, which in turn enhance their work motivation and engagement [80]. Furthermore, Dai and Wang [81] underline that proactive personality fosters work engagement by enabling individuals to manage job demands effectively. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Proactive personality has a positive effect on work engagement

2.6. Work Engagement Mediates Proactive Personality and Subjective Career Success

Empirical evidence consistently shows that individuals with a proactive personality generally exhibit higher levels of work engagement, as reflected in greater energy, dedication, and absorption in their work [49]. Work engagement may serve as an important psychological mechanism linking proactive personality to subjective career success. Proactively engaged individuals tend to invest more energy in their work roles and actively pursue opportunities that align with their personal career goals, which in turn enhances their perceptions of career progress and achievement [25], [82]. In addition, a prior study found that proactive personality is positively associated with self-esteem, work ideology, and work engagement, which in turn strengthens job satisfaction and long-term career success [83]. Similarly, Li et al. [50] concluded that work engagement acts as a key mediator in the relationship between proactive personality and career success. Hence, the hypothesis is provided below:

H3: Work engagement mediates proactive personality and subjective career success

2.7. Perceived Organizational Support and Subjective Career Success

According to Abuzaid [59], employees perceive support from their organization, such as concern for their well-being, recognition of their contributions, and the provision of adequate resources, which directly enhances their personal perceptions of career attainment. Using career satisfaction as an indicator of subjective career success, prior studies suggest that perceived organizational support (POS) plays an important role in shaping employees' evaluations of their career outcomes. Employees who perceive stronger organizational support tend to report higher levels of career satisfaction and more positive perceptions of their career progress [31], [38], [84]. More recent research further reinforces the critical role of POS in enhancing subjective career success. For instance, Jinbei et al. [33] demonstrated that organizational support, both in the form of attention to employee well-being and the provision of resources, constitutes a key factor driving employees' perceptions of career success. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Perceived organizational support has a positive effect on subjective career success.

2.8. Perceived Organizational Support and Work Engagement

Perceived organizational support (POS) reflects employees' perceptions of the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being [29]. Empirical evidence shows that POS provides a sense of psychological and emotional security that enables employees to engage more deeply in their work. For example, Xu et al. [85] found that POS directly contributes to higher levels of work engagement among nurses. Indeed, a study noted that POS also helps to create a conducive work environment in which employees feel secure, valued, and supported by their organization, thereby positively influencing their motivation to engage more actively in their work [86]. Lee and Shin [87] further remarked that POS exerts a significant direct effect on work engagement, even during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. POS facilitates better work–life balance, which in turn strengthens employee engagement. Consistent with these findings, other studies also report that employees who perceive higher organizational support tend to demonstrate stronger levels of work engagement, as they feel valued and motivated to reciprocate the support provided by their organization [32], [59], [67], [73]. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed as below:

H5: Perceived organizational support has a positive effect on work engagement

2.9. Work Engagement Mediates Perceived Organizational Support and Subjective Career Success

Perceived organizational support refers to employees' perceptions that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being [63]. A prior study noted that proactive personality will make employee more motivated to commit to the organization, which enhances psychological security and long-term career satisfaction [33]. In addition, engaged employees will perceive their work as meaningful, challenging, and offering opportunities for personal development. Such engagement functions as a psychological mechanism that bridges organizational support and career satisfaction. In other words, POS not only directly enhances subjective career success, but may also exert an indirect influence through increased work engagement, as employees who perceive stronger organizational support tend to invest more energy and dedication in their work, which subsequently strengthens their evaluations of career progress and satisfaction [59], [60]. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Work engagement mediates perceived organizational support and subjective career success

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2.10. Work Engagement and Subjective Career Success

Work engagement is recognized a significant contributor for career success. Individuals who are more engaged in their work tend to be more productive, which supports the attainment of career goals and enhances positive self-evaluations [88]. Work engagement fosters feelings of pride and satisfaction regarding career achievements, which are core components of subjective career success [89]. High levels of work engagement also generate positive emotions, such as enthusiasm and satisfaction, that enable individuals to evaluate their careers more favorably. Ngo and Hui [90] found that work engagement has a robust positive correlation with subjective career success. Consistent with this finding, several subsequent studies also report that employees who are more engaged in their work tend to experience higher levels of subjective career success and more positive evaluations of their career progress [37], [38], [39], [40], [88], [89], [91], [92]. Abuzaid[59] further emphasizes that employees who feel more engaged tend to evaluate their achievements more positively, thereby enhancing their subjective perceptions of career success. Moreover, high work engagement is associated with better performance, greater enthusiasm, and higher job satisfaction, ultimately strengthening individuals' subjective evaluations of their careers. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7: Work engagement has a positive effect on subjective career success

3. Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships among proactive personality, perceived organizational support (POS), and subjective career success, including the mediating role of work engagement (see figure 1). Quantitative methods rely on structured procedures and measurable data, which support objectivity and reliability in the analysis of relationships reported in prior research [93]. This research design supports the validity of the findings and provides a framework that can be replicated in future studies [94]

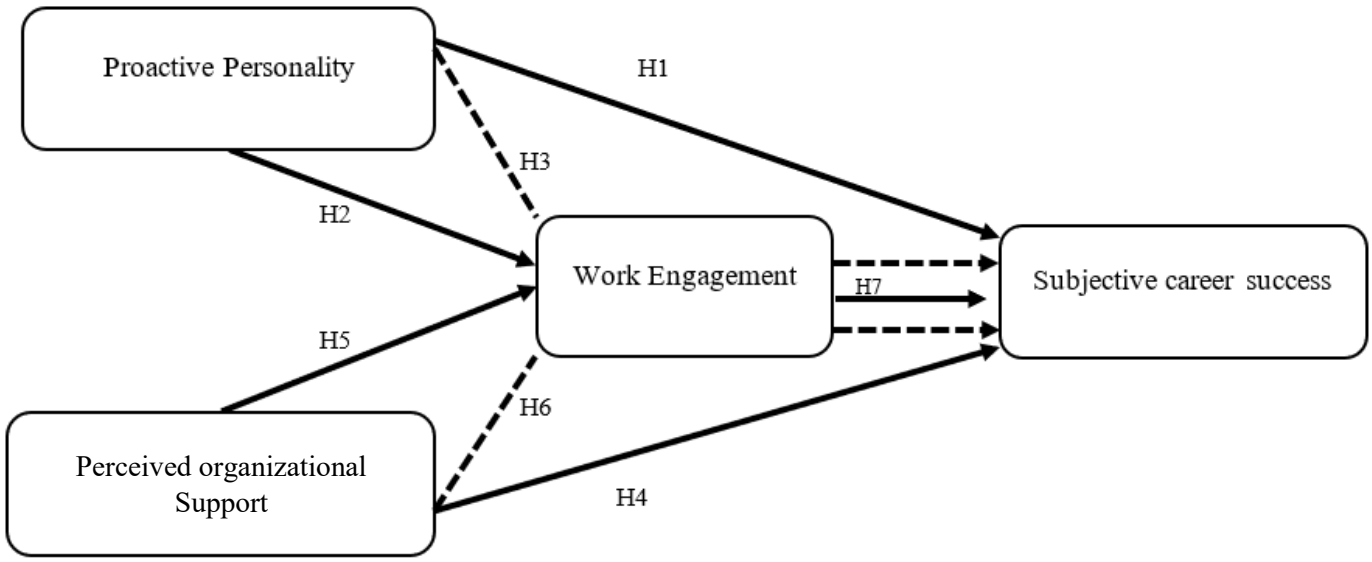

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Model

The sampling approach employed in this study was proportional random sampling to ensure that each subgroup was represented in proportion to its size. The sample consisted of 278 full-time academics drawn from private universities accredited as "Baik" in Indonesia. The accreditation category "Baik" is part of the Indonesian national higher education accreditation system administered by the National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (BAN-PT), which classifies institutions into several levels, including Unggul (excellent), Baik Sekali (very good), and Baik (good). Institutions with "Baik" accreditation meet the minimum national quality standards for higher education and represent a substantial segment of private universities in Indonesia. The sampling frame comprised full-time academics from six private universities, with population data obtained from the Higher Education Database (Pangkalan Data Pendidikan Tinggi – PDDikti). The total population consisted of 999 academics. The number of respondents from each university was determined proportionally according to the size of the academic population in each institution. Using a sampling proportion of 27.8%, the final sample included 33 academics from Universitas Buddhi Dharma, 103 from Universitas Bina Bangsa, 29 from Universitas Falatehan, 30 from Universitas Insan Pembangunan Indonesia, 44 from Universitas

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Primagraha, and 39 from Universitas Tangerang Raya. This proportional allocation ensured that the sample adequately represented the distribution of academics across the participating universities. To ensure the adequacy of the sample size for PLS-SEM analysis, the 10-times rule was applied. This rule suggests that the minimum sample size should be at least ten times the maximum number of structural paths directed at any endogenous construct. In this study, the maximum number of paths pointing to a single construct is three, indicating a minimum sample size requirement of 30. The actual sample size of 278 exceeds this threshold, confirming that the sample is sufficient for robust estimation of the model

The accessible population was deliberately chosen to ensure that the institutions examined possessed relatively formal and stable career systems and organizational structures, thereby enabling constructs such as POS, work engagement, and subjective career success to be measured validly [95]. Participants in this study were volunteers, and informed consent was obtained through an online form in which participants indicated their consent to participate for this research. All procedures involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards established by the institutional research ethics committee of the first author's affiliated institution, under approval number 13/KEP.UNSERA/III/2025. Ethical approval for this study was granted by Universitas Serang Raya.

The measurement instruments used in this study consisted of several sections. Proactive personality was assessed using ten items adopted from Hadi et al. [55]; AlShamsi et al. [49]; and Seibert et al. [23]. POS was measured using eight items adapted from Abuzaid [59], Imran et al. [96]; and Eisenberger et al. [29]. Work engagement was assessed using the short version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), comprising nine items adopted from Cheng et al. [39]; Kaya and Karatepe [38]; and Schaufeli et al. [68]. Subjective career success was measured using five items adapted from Varela and Premeaux [47] and Greenhaus et al. [16]. All measurement items were validated and refined through expert review by senior professors at Universitas Negeri Jakarta. Data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms and disseminated through institutional and professional WhatsApp group chats. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

Given that the research model involves multiple latent variables measured through reflective indicators, as well as mediating relationships within the structural model, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed using SmartPLS version 4. This technique was selected because PLS-SEM is particularly suitable for research aimed at prediction and theory development, especially in the context of complex models and data that do not meet the assumptions of multivariate normal distribution [97]. To enhance methodological rigor and transparency, the SEM-PLS model is explicitly specified through both measurement (outer) and structural (inner) model equations. All constructs in this study are modeled as reflective constructs.

The measurement model defines the relationships between latent variables and their observed indicators as follows: $x_i = \lambda_i \xi + \varepsilon_i$. Where x_i represents the observed indicator, λ_i denotes the factor loading, ξ represents the latent construct, and ε_i is the measurement error term. Furthermore, the structural model specifies the relationships among latent variables and is formulated as follows:

$$\eta_1 \text{ (Work Engagement)} = \beta_1 \xi_1 \text{ (Perceived Organizational Support)} + \beta_2 \xi_2 \text{ (Proactive Personality)} + \zeta_1 \quad (1)$$

$$\eta_2 \text{ (Subjective Career Success)} = \beta_3 \xi_1 \text{ (Perceived Organizational Support)} + \beta_4 \xi_2 \text{ (Proactive Personality)} + \beta_5 \eta_1 \text{ (Work Engagement)} + \zeta_2 \quad (2)$$

β represents the path coefficients and ζ denotes the structural error terms.

The structural model can also be expressed in matrix form as follows:

$$\eta = B\eta + \Gamma\xi + \zeta \quad (3)$$

where η represents the vector of endogenous latent variables, ξ denotes the vector of exogenous latent variables, B is the matrix of relationships among endogenous variables, Γ is the matrix of path coefficients from exogenous to endogenous variables, and ζ represents the vector of structural disturbances. In this study, η includes Work Engagement and Subjective Career Success, while ξ includes Perceived Organizational Support and Proactive Personality. The PLS-SEM estimation follows an iterative algorithmic procedure. First, outer weights are initialized to estimate latent variable scores as linear combinations of their observed indicators. Second, inner model relationships are estimated by updating the latent variable scores based on the specified structural paths. Third, outer weights are recalculated to improve the relationships between latent variables and their indicators. This iterative process continues until convergence is achieved, typically when changes in outer weights fall below a predefined threshold. Finally, path coefficients are estimated, and statistical significance is assessed using bootstrapping procedures.

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Prior to data analysis, data preprocessing was conducted to ensure data quality. The dataset was examined for missing values and outliers, and no significant issues were identified. In addition, data distribution was assessed using skewness and kurtosis values. The results indicate that skewness values ranged from −0.786 to 0.395 and kurtosis values ranged from −0.828 to 0.726, all of which fall within acceptable thresholds, indicating no severe deviation from normality. Although PLS-SEM does not require strict assumptions of multivariate normality [97], the selection of this method in the present study is based on predictive objectives, model complexity, and data characteristics.

To enhance transparency and reproducibility, the analytical procedure of this study is summarized in figure 2. PLS-SEM analytical Workflow.

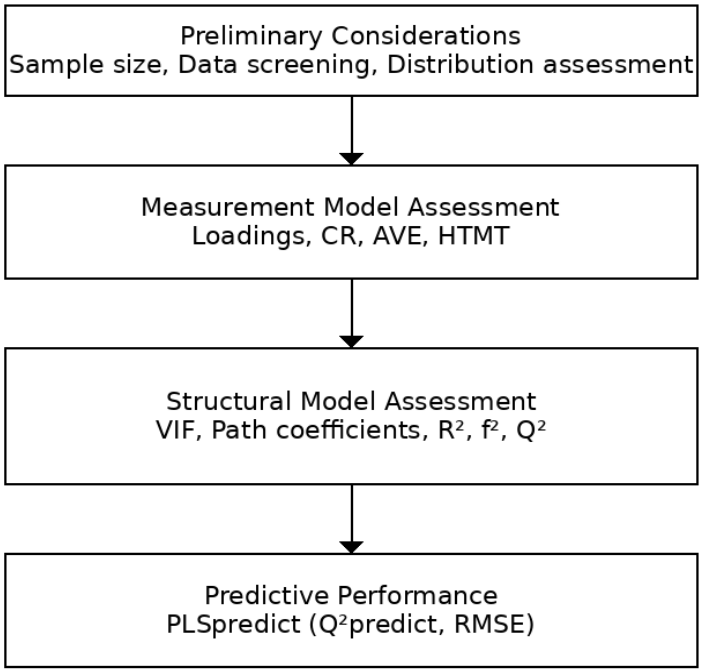

Figure 2. PLS-SEM Analytical Workflow

The analysis begins with preliminary data assessment, followed by measurement model evaluation, structural model analysis, and predictive performance assessment using PLS predict.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Respondent Profile

The demographic characteristics of the respondents in this study are based on 278 valid questionnaires collected. The majority of respondents were female (51.4%), while male respondents accounted for 48.6%. In terms of age, the largest proportion of respondents was aged 30–34 years (22.7%), followed by those aged 40–44 years (21.6%), and 35–39 years (20.9%). Additionally, 59.0% of the respondents reported holding structural or administrative positions within their institutions.

4.2. Common method bias

To assess the potential issue of common method bias (CMB), this study employed the full collinearity assessment approach recommended by Kock [98]. According to this method, variance inflation factor (VIF) values are examined to detect potential collinearity among constructs that may indicate common method bias. Kock [98] suggests that VIF values below the threshold of 3.3 indicate that common method bias is unlikely to be a serious concern. The results show that the VIF values for all constructs range from 1.531 to 2.179 (see table 1), which are well below the recommended threshold. Therefore, the results indicate that common method bias does not pose a significant threat to the validity of this study.

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Table 1. Common method bias

Variable	Perceived Organizational Support	Proactive Personality	Subjective Career Success	Work Engagement
Perceived Organizational Support			1.803	1.531
Proactive Personality			2.011	1.531
Subjective Career Success				
Work Engagement			2.179	

4.3. Measurement Model

The results of the measurement model assessment are summarized in Table 2. All indicators for each construct namely proactive personality, perceived organizational support (POS), work engagement, and subjective career success exhibited factor loadings above the minimum threshold of 0.708 [97]. Therefore, no measurement items were removed during the validation process. The measurement scales were adopted from previously validated studies without modification, ensuring consistency with their original operationalization. This indicates that each indicator significantly reflects its corresponding construct, thereby satisfying the validity requirement. The composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs also exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 [97], ranging from 0.930 to 0.949, which demonstrates strong internal consistency among the measurement items within each construct. Accordingly, all four constructs exhibit a high level of reliability.

Table 2. Validity Assessment

Variable	No Item	Loading Factor	CR	AVE	Result
Proactive Personality	X1.1	0.777	0.938	0.638	Valid
	X1.10	0.817			
	X1.2	0.762			
	X1.3	0.818			
	X1.4	0.798			
	X1.5	0.842			
	X1.6	0.791			
	X1.7	0.724			
	X1.8	0.818			
	X1.9	0.837			
Perceived Organizational Support	X2.1	0.871	0.949	0.732	Valid
	X2.2	0.819			
	X2.3	0.870			
	X2.4	0.836			
	X2.5	0.848			
	X2.6	0.860			
	X2.7	0.857			
	X2.8	0.883			
Work Engagement	Z.1.1	0.835	0.947	0.693	Valid
	Z.1.2	0.793			
	Z.1.3	0.890			
	Z.2.1	0.890			
	Z.2.2	0.818			
	Z.2.3	0.875			
	Z.3.1	0.716			
	Z.3.2	0.845			
	Z.3.3	0.816			
Subjective Career Success	Y2.1	0.913	0.930	0.780	Valid
	Y2.2	0.875			
	Y2.3	0.901			
	Y2.4	0.909			
	Y2.5	0.814			

CR=Composite Reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted

Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, ranging from 0.638 for proactive personality to 0.780 for subjective career success. This indicates that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its indicators, thereby satisfying the criterion for convergent validity

[97]. With all threshold values for factor loadings, CR, and AVE being met, it can be concluded that the measurement model in this study fulfils the required standards of validity and reliability and is therefore suitable for further analysis, including the assessment of the structural model. To improve interpretability, a graphical representation of composite reliability values is presented in figure 3.

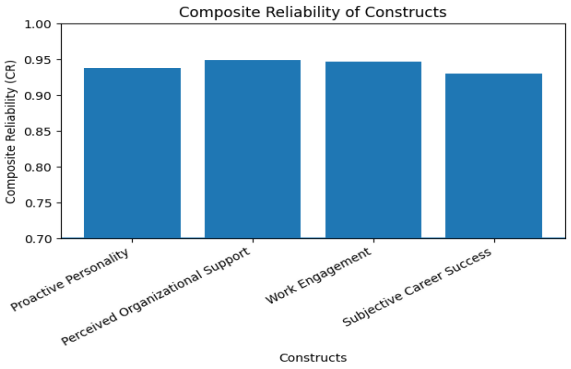

Figure 3. Composite Reliability of Construct

All constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.7, indicating satisfactory internal consistency reliability.

The HTMT values are presented in Table 3. To enhance interpretability, a color gradient is applied to visually represent the magnitude of the HTMT values. As shown, all values are below the recommended thresholds of 0.90 [97], indicating that discriminant validity is established among all constructs.

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Variable	Perceived Organizational Support	Proactive Personality	Subjective Career Success	Work Engagement
Perceived Organizational Support				
Proactive Personality	0.624			
Subjective Career Success	0.648	0.724		
Work Engagement	0.664	0.717	0.709	

Note: Color gradient represents the magnitude of HTMT values, where darker shades indicate higher values. All HTMT values are below the recommended threshold of 0.90, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity.

4.4. Structural Model

As illustrated in figure 4, the results of the structural model analysis summarized in table 3 confirm and support for all seven proposed hypotheses.

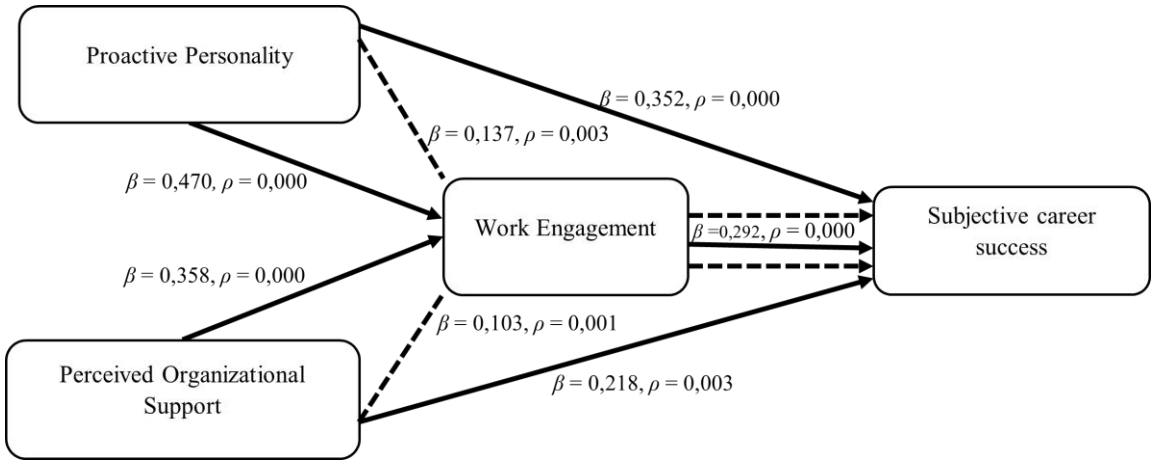

Figure 4. Structural equation modeling results

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The structural model was assessed by examining the coefficient of determination (R^2) and model fit indices. The R^2 value for work engagement is 0.541, indicating that proactive personality and perceived organizational support explain 54.1% of the variance in work engagement. Meanwhile, the R^2 value for subjective career success is 0.566, suggesting that proactive personality, perceived organizational support, and work engagement jointly explain 56.6% of the variance in subjective career success. In addition, the model fit assessment shows an SRMR value of 0.046, which is below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating a good model fit.

In addition to path coefficients and R^2 values, effect size (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) were assessed to further evaluate the structural model. The f^2 values indicate that proactive personality has a large effect on work engagement ($f^2 = 0.314$), while perceived organizational support shows a moderate effect on work engagement ($f^2 = 0.178$). The effects of proactive personality and perceived organizational support on subjective career success are small to moderate ($f^2 = 0.142$ and 0.061, respectively). Furthermore, work engagement has a small effect on subjective career success ($f^2 = 0.090$). The predictive relevance of the model was assessed using Q^2 values obtained through the blindfolding procedure. The results show that subjective career success ($Q^2 = 0.512$) and work engagement ($Q^2 = 0.527$) both have strong predictive relevance, as all Q^2 values are greater than zero and exceed recommended thresholds. These results demonstrate the predictive capability of the model. Predictive performance was assessed using the PLS predict procedure. All Q^2predict values are greater than zero, indicating predictive relevance. Most indicators show lower RMSE values in the PLS model compared to the linear benchmark model, suggesting moderate to high predictive performance[99]. The results, including Q^2predict values and the comparison between PLS-SEM and linear model (LM) prediction errors (RMSE), are presented in table 4.

Tabel 4. PLS predict Results

Indicator	Q^2predict	PLS_RMSE	LM_RMSE	Interpretation
Y2.1	0.382	0.741	0.780	PLS < LM
Y2.2	0.361	0.761	0.771	PLS < LM
Y2.3	0.399	0.735	0.761	PLS < LM
Y2.4	0.448	0.718	0.758	PLS < LM
Y2.5	0.390	0.698	0.718	PLS < LM
Z1.1	0.427	0.634	0.661	PLS < LM
Z1.2	0.343	0.663	0.683	PLS < LM
Z1.3	0.432	0.647	0.678	PLS < LM
Z2.1	0.442	0.605	0.609	PLS < LM
Z2.2	0.276	0.691	0.708	PLS < LM
Z2.3	0.401	0.647	0.669	PLS < LM
Z3.1	0.263	0.822	0.804	PLS > LM
Z3.2	0.353	0.696	0.733	PLS < LM
Z3.3	0.332	0.691	0.685	PLS > LM

Note: PLS < LM indicates better predictive performance of the PLS model compared to the linear benchmark

Bootstrapping confidence intervals (95%) were examined to assess the stability of the path coefficients. The results of the direct effects are presented in table 5. The results show that all confidence intervals do not include zero, indicating that all relationships are statistically significant and robust. Consistent with these findings, the results of the structural model analysis indicate that all hypotheses proposed in this study are empirically supported. First, proactive personality was found to have a positive and significant effect on subjective career success ($\beta = 0.352$; $t = 4.509$; $p < 0.001$), confirming H1. In addition, proactive personality exerted a strong positive influence on work engagement ($\beta = 0.470$; $t = 6.765$; $p < 0.001$), indicating to confirm H2. Furthermore, POS had a positive effect on subjective career success ($\beta = 0.218$; $t = 2.979$; $p = 0.003$), supporting H4. Indeed, POS was also shown to significantly increase work engagement ($\beta = 0.354$; $t = 4.909$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H5. Finally, work engagement was found to have a significant effect on subjective career success ($\beta = 0.292$; $t = 3.671$; $p < 0.001$), indicating to confirm H7.

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Table 5. Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	T statistics	P values	CI (2.5% – 97.5%)	Conclusion
H1: Proactive Personality → Subjective Career Success	0.352	4.509	0.000	[0.202 – 0.504]	Supported
H2: Proactive Personality → Work Engagement	0.470	6.765	0.000	[0.333 – 0.602]	Supported
H4: Perceived Organizational Support → Subjective Career Success	0.218	2.979	0.003	[0.084 – 0.366]	Supported
H5: Perceived Organizational Support → Work Engagement	0.354	4.909	0.000	[0.209 – 0.491]	Supported
H7: Work Engagement → Subjective Career Success	0.292	3.671	0.000	[0.128 – 0.438]	Supported

Note: CI: Confidence Interval

The indirect effects were assessed using bootstrapping confidence intervals (95%). The results of the indirect effects are presented in table 6 and the results show that all confidence intervals do not include zero, indicating that the mediating effects are statistically significant and robust. Specifically, work engagement significantly mediates the relationship between proactive personality and subjective career success ($\beta = 0.137$; $p = 0.003$; CI [0.057 – 0.237]), supporting H3, as well as the relationship between perceived organizational support and subjective career success ($\beta = 0.103$; $p = 0.001$; CI [0.051 – 0.171]), supporting H6.

Table 6. Indirect effects.

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	T statistics	P values	CI (2.5% – 97.5%)	Conclusion
H3: Proactive Personality → Work Engagement → Subjective Career Success	0.137	2.998	0.003	0.051	Supported
H6: Perceived Organizational Support→ Work Engagement → Subjective Career Success	0.103	3.376	0.001	0.057	Supported

Note: CI: Confidence Interval

5. Discussion

This study examines seven hypotheses proposed through a structural equation modelling framework (see tables 5 and 6). In greater detail, the first hypothesis demonstrates that proactive personality significantly predicts subjective career success ($\beta = 0.352$, $p < 0.001$). Importantly, this effect is stronger than that of perceived organizational support ($\beta = 0.218$, $p = 0.003$), indicating that personal initiative contributes more substantially to career success perceptions than external support mechanisms. This finding is consistent with previous studies by AlShamsi et al. [49]; James [100]; Zhang et al. [26]; Mobeen et al. [101]; Chang et al. [102]; and Jiang et al. [57]. Academics with proactive personality traits are more inclined to actively implement scholarly ideas and pursue professional development opportunities, fostering intrinsic motivation and perceived control over their work environment. Such proactive behaviors enhance continuous learning, teaching innovation, and collaboration, thereby strengthening professional competencies and leading academics to perceive their careers as more meaningful and successful.

The next finding demonstrates that proactive personality has a stronger positive effect on work engagement ($\beta = 0.470$, $p < 0.001$) compared to perceived organizational support ($\beta = 0.354$, $p < 0.001$). This difference in magnitude indicates that individual-driven factors exert a more dominant influence on academics' engagement than organizational support mechanisms. Consistent with prior studies research [76], [77], [78], [81], academics with higher levels of proactive personality are more inclined to initiate ideas and actively translate them into concrete activities within the university environment. From the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, proactive personality can be understood as a personal resource with stronger predictive power than organizational support, facilitating positive psychological states that deepen academics' involvement and sustain their work engagement.

In addition, this study reveals that work engagement mediates the relationship between proactive personality and subjective career success. Specifically, work engagement exerts a significant positive effect on career success ($\beta = 0.292$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that proactive personality alone may not be sufficient to enhance academics' career outcomes unless accompanied by high levels of engagement. This mediating pathway highlights that proactive traits translate into career success more effectively when academics are deeply engaged in their work. From a quantitative perspective, the

indirect effect of proactive personality on subjective career success through work engagement (β = 0.137) accounts for approximately 28% of the total effect, indicating partial mediation. This suggests that while proactive personality has a direct influence on career success, a substantial portion of its impact is transmitted through work engagement, underscoring the importance of engagement as a key psychological mechanism. Consistent with prior studies (e.g., [39], [85]), private higher education institutions can strengthen academics' engagement by recognizing initiatives and innovations and by providing resources that support the implementation of academic ideas. Furthermore, the development of career support systems that encourage active participation in research, innovative teaching, and scholarly collaboration may help transform proactive potential into meaningful and subjectively successful career experiences.

Fourth, this study provides evidence of a direct effect of perceived organizational support (POS) on subjective career success (β = 0.218, p = 0.003). Although this effect is weaker than that of proactive personality (β = 0.352, p < 0.001), it remains statistically significant and highlights the importance of institutional recognition and support in shaping academics' career evaluations. This finding is consistent with previous studies [31], [33], [41], [59] and extends the literature by demonstrating the strength and consistency of this relationship within academic settings. When academics perceive that their contributions are recognized and valued, they are more likely to evaluate their career progress positively. From an organizational perspective, private higher education institutions can strengthen POS by creating opportunities for academics to express ideas and participate in decision-making processes, such as discussion forums and participatory governance mechanisms. Such practices foster a supportive environment that complements individual proactivity and enhances academics' perceptions of career success.

Fifth, the results indicate a significant effect of perceived organizational support (POS) on work engagement (β = 0.354, p < 0.001), consistent with major studies in this theme (e.g., [59], [86], [87]). Although this effect is weaker than that of proactive personality (β = 0.470, p < 0.001), it remains substantial, highlighting the complementary role of organizational support in fostering engagement. When universities demonstrate concern for academics' contributions through recognition and appreciation systems, academics become more involved and dedicated to their professional roles. From the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, organizational support and recognition function as important job resources that stimulate positive work-related motivation. As a result, supportive institutional practices can strengthen academics' levels of work engagement, complementing the stronger influence of proactive personality.

The next finding demonstrates that work engagement significantly mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and subjective career success. Specifically, work engagement exerts a positive effect on career success (β = 0.292, p < 0.001), which is stronger than the direct effect of POS (β = 0.218, p = 0.003). This indicates that organizational support contributes to career success primarily through its ability to enhance academics' engagement. From a quantitative perspective, the indirect effect of POS on subjective career success through work engagement (β = 0.103) accounts for approximately 32% of the total effect, indicating partial mediation. This suggests that while POS has a direct influence on career success, a meaningful portion of its impact is transmitted through work engagement as a key explanatory mechanism. Consistent with previous studies by Oubibi et al. [31], Abuzaid [59], and Dose et al. [103], these results highlight that when academics perceive stronger organizational support such as recognition of contributions and provision of resources for professional development they become more engaged in their work. Higher levels of engagement, in turn, encourage academics to invest greater energy and dedication in their professional roles, ultimately leading to more positive evaluations of career progress and achievements.

The last finding indicates that work engagement has a significant effect on subjective career success (β = 0.292, p < 0.001). Although this effect is slightly weaker than proactive personality (β = 0.352) and stronger than perceived organizational support (β = 0.218), it highlights the pivotal role of engagement as a psychological mechanism linking both individual and organizational factors to career outcomes. This finding is consistent with international literature that positions work engagement as a key determinant of individuals' positive evaluations of career achievements and satisfaction [31], [39], [40], [59]. In the academic context, institutional support for *Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi* activities may encourage academics to become more absorbed in their work and actively involved in meaningful academic tasks such as teaching, research, and community service. Higher levels of engagement motivate academics to invest greater effort in developing professional competencies and pursuing innovative activities, ultimately leading to more positive evaluations of career progress and achievements [104], [105].

The findings of this study have significant implications. Theoretically, it enriches the understanding of how proactive personality and POS shape and influence academics' subjective career success through two complementary pathways. In contexts characterized by limited structural mobility, such as higher education systems in developing countries, psychological factors including proactive personality and POS are highly dependent on the mediating role of work

engagement. These results further strengthen the cross-cultural validation of SCCT and underscore the importance of advancing context-sensitive theories of career success.

Practically, the findings of this study suggest that private higher education institutions need to strengthen human resource management practices that support the sustainability of academics' career development. Given the role of proactive personality in shaping subjective career success, universities may encourage academics to formulate and periodically evaluate individual career goals as part of goal-oriented career management practices. Structured academic mentoring and coaching programs can serve as mechanisms through which institutions provide guidance, recognition, and professional support, thereby strengthening perceived organizational support (POS). In addition, institutions may enhance POS by establishing participatory organizational practices, such as regular communication forums and transparent feedback channels. Such supportive practices may help foster higher levels of work engagement among academics, which in turn contributes to more positive evaluations of their career progress and achievements.

Furthermore, private higher education institutions need to strengthen institutional support for the implementation of *Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi* activities in order to enhance academics' work engagement. The provision of adequate resources, recognition of academic contributions, and opportunities for innovation in teaching and research can foster higher levels of work absorption and a stronger sense of pride in the academic profession. Lastly, the mediating role of work engagement underscores that POS and proactive personality do not automatically translate into subjective career success in the absence of high levels of work engagement. Accordingly, private higher education institutions should focus academic career development policies on promoting academics' psychological attachment to their work. Structured career development programs, academic mentoring, and opportunities for continuous competence development can help transform individual potential and institutional support into more meaningful career experiences.

6. Conclusions

This study concludes that academics' subjective career success in private higher education institutions is significantly influenced by proactive personality and POS, both directly and indirectly through work engagement. A proactive personality fosters higher levels of work engagement and more positive career evaluations, while perceived institutional support serves as a prominent job resource that strengthens dedication and absorption in the implementation of the Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi of higher education. The mediation findings confirm that work engagement constitutes a key psychological mechanism linking individual and organizational factors in shaping perceptions of academic career success. The results highlight the importance of an integrated approach to academic career management that combines the strengthening of individual characteristics, a supportive work environment, and work engagement as fundamental foundations of subjective career success. Beyond strengthening theoretical models of career success in the academic context, the findings of this study also offer transferable insights for higher education institutions in developing countries that seek to build more supportive work environments and sustainably enhance academics' work engagement.

Despite its contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged, and further research remains warranted. First, this study employed a cross-sectional survey design, meaning that the data represent respondents' perceptions at a single point in time. This design limits the ability to capture changes in academics' perceptions over time. Future studies are therefore encouraged to adopt longitudinal designs or mixed-method approaches to provide more comprehensive insights. Second, the use of self-assessment instruments may introduce potential bias, as respondents' subjective perceptions may differ from actual conditions, thereby affecting data accuracy. Future research should consider incorporating multi-source data, such as institutional records or academic social network data, to enhance the robustness and validity of the findings.

Third, this study focuses exclusively on private higher education institutions in Indonesia; therefore, the findings may have limited generalizability to other educational sectors or to countries with different cultural, economic, and regulatory contexts. Future research is encouraged to broaden its scope by including private as well as other higher education institutions beyond Indonesia. Fourth, this study highlights the need to examine the proposed variables using objective or multi-source data and to apply longitudinal or comparative approaches in order to gain a deeper understanding of career success in private higher education. Future studies are recommended to employ large-scale confirmatory factor analysis and multi-method validation across different types of higher education institutions to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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7. Declarations

7.1. Author Contributions

Conceptualization: N., C.Y., and A.W.; Methodology: N.; Software: N.; Validation: N., C.Y., and A.W.; Formal Analysis: N., C.Y., and A.W.; Investigation: N.; Resources: C.Y. and A.W.; Data Curation: N.; Writing Original Draft Preparation: N.; Writing Review and Editing: N., C.Y., and A.W.; Visualization: N.; Supervision: C.Y. and A.W.; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

7.2. Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

7.3. Funding

No funding was received by the authors for the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

7.4. Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was approved by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Serang Raya (Approval No. 13/KEP.UNSERA/III/2025).

7.5. Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

7.6. Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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