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PROACTIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS, DELAYED GRATIFICATIONS AND CAREER SUCCESS IN IT PROFESSIONALS

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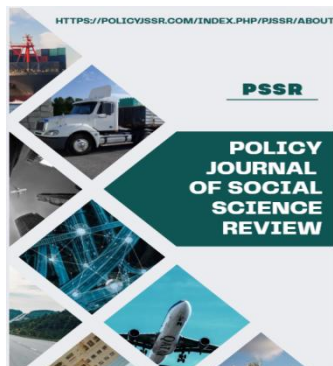
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to explore the association between proactive personality traits and the self-assessed career success of IT specialists in Pakistan while concentrating on the mediating impact of delayed gratification. A purposive sample of 200 professionals in the age bracket of 30-45 years and having a minimum of five years of experience was collected. The sample was administered The Proactive Personality Scale, the Delaying Gratification Inventory, and the Career Satisfaction Scale. Correlation results showed that proactive personality traits were strongly associated with delayed gratification ($r = .708, p < .01$) and moderately with subjective career success ($r = .481, p < .01$). The construct of delayed gratification exhibited a significant positive relationship with career success ($r = .589, p < .01$). Regression results indicated that delayed gratification acted as a strong predictor of career success ($\beta = .499, p < .001$). However, the direct effect of proactive personality was negligible when both predictors were included in the model. Mediation analysis with bootstrap confirmed that the effect of proactive personality on career success was conveyed through delayed gratification. These results indicate that self-regulation of behavior in the temporal dimension oriented towards the future conceivably overshadows proactive behaviors in determining the stride towards career fulfillment and satisfaction.

Keywords: Proactive personality, delayed gratification, subjective career success, mediation, IT professionals, Pakistan



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Introduction

In any knowledge-based economy, the old-age criteria for career growth such as attaining promotions, receiving larger sums of money or higher titles has become obsolete. Scholars have been shifting their focus to self-evaluations which include satisfaction, perception of growth and fulfillment as career success (Hemline, 2005). An understanding of psychological factors which lead to such results is extremely important, particularly within the IT (information technology) sector.

Career outcomes have been shown to have the impact of a proactive personality. Individuals with a proactive personality will actively alter their surroundings to ensure the attainment of goals (Bateman & Crant, 1993). such disciplines as IT which are characterized by a high pace of change are likely to experience an increase in the number of individuals with proactive tendencies (Crant, 2000).

No less important to the success of a professional is the phenomenon of delayed gratification. The concept has been defined as the ability to forego immediate rewards in favor of long lasting benefits (Mischel et al., 1989). This ability to self-regulate leads to enduring and resilient professionals who are able to focus on long term strategic goals instead of being sidetracked by short term, low-value activities.

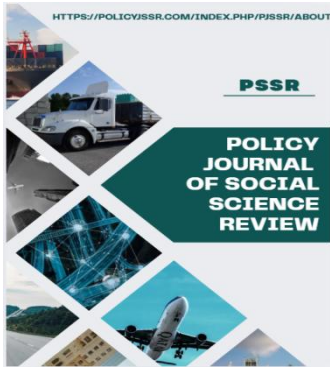
On the other hand, the action of proactively engaging in tasks may differ

from the long-term achievement of success resulting from the ability to delay gratification. Success resulting from the delay of immediate gratification lacks proactive steps in reaching goals. This forms the basis of the study concerning the impact of proactive personality traits paired with the ability to delay gratification in predicting career achievements in the information technology industry in Pakistan, a rapidly changing field that places a premium on psychological capital.

Literature Review

Seibert et al. (1999) and Crant (2000) demonstrated that career achievement in any given field was fueled by proactive changes. Along the same lines, promotion, self-advancement and mobility were linked to proactive actions taken. Further, proactive behaviors were linked to investment in career learning and in turn, career achievement, which was observed by Fuller and Marler (2009). Parker et al. (2006) also substantiated the claim of proactivity by linking it to success.

Research on proactivity in the workplace leaves out the ability to forego rewards in the short-term, which has now emerged as a strong predictor of achievement. Self-control, as demonstrated by Duckworth and Seligman (2005), has proven to be a greater predictor of success than intelligence. Mischel et al. (1989) highlighted its importance in both educational and career-related outcomes,



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whereas Scheres and Sanfey (2006) pointed out its importance in making strategic choices.

In Pakistan, local studies corroborate these patterns. Raza and Naqvi (2011) showed that proactive executives perceiving greater career success. Zubair and Kamal (2017) pointed out that IT professionals with proactive tendencies advanced more swiftly. Ahmed and Malik (2013) showed that delayed gratification predicted academic and career persistence. Still, there is little to no literature exploring the interplay among these traits.

Therefore, this research aims to fill the gap of whether delayed gratification would mediate the relationship of proactive personality and subjective career success among IT professionals in Pakistan.

Rationale of the Study

While there is international evidence showing the importance of proactivity and delayed gratification, there is scant South Asian empirical work that attempts to blend these two variables into a single model. In Pakistan, these traits have been studied in isolation; however, the delayed gratification centering on a proactive personality and career success link has not been studied. In addition, the information technology IT industry is turbulent, highly

innovative, and competitive; thus, both grasping opportunities and the willingness to exert continuous effort over time are essential. This study fills the critical gap of investigating the delayed gratification mediating mechanism on the relationship between proactive personality and career success in subjective terms among IT professionals of Pakistan in order to both contribute to the international theory and provide indigenous evidence.

Hypotheses:

H1: Proactive personality positively correlates with subjective career success.

H2: Delayed gratification positively correlates with subjective career success.

H3: Delayed gratification mediates the relationship between proactive personality and career success.

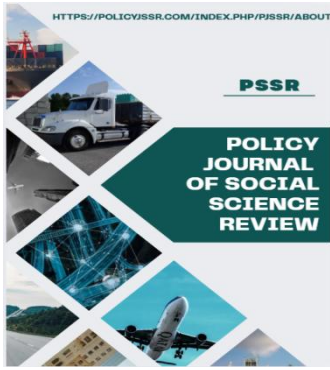
Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional, quantitative design with structured self-report surveys.

Sample

A purposive sample consisting of 200 IT professionals from Pakistan was chosen. Participants were required to be between ages 30-45, employed in IT positions, and have no less than five years of experience in the field.



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Table 1
Sample Characteristics (N = 200)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	142	71
	Female	58	29
Age Group	30–35	92	46
	36–45	108	54
Education	Bachelor's	104	52
	Master's	96	48

Description:

Out of the sample of 200 IT professionals gathered, the most were men, with 71% of the respondents as men, while the other 29% were women. 46% of the respondents were 30–35 years old, while the remaining 54% were 36–45 years old. 52% of the respondents had a bachelor's degree while the other 48% had a master's degree or above. These statistics indicate that the sample was fairly homogeneous in relation to education and attained mid career professionals in the IT industry.

Measures

Proactive Personality Scale (PPS; Bateman & Crant, 1993) 17 items, 5 point Likert, $\alpha = .85$

Delaying Gratification Inventory (DGI-35; Hoerger et al., 2011) 35 items, 5 domains, $\alpha = .75, 91$

Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS; Greenhaus et al., 1990) – 5 items, 5-point Likert, $\alpha = .85$

Procedure

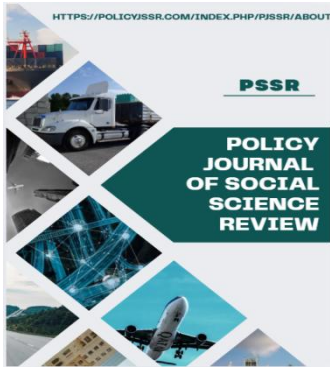
Data were gathered from IT companies through online forms and during personal visits. Confidentiality and informed consent were maintained.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Delayed Gratification	3.16	0.70			
2. Career Success	3.30	1.07	.589		
3. Proactive Personality	3.17	0.71	.708	.481	



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Note. N = 200. $p < .01$.

Description:

From the results of the correlation analysis, it was found that proactive personality goes hand in hand with delayed gratification ($r = .708$, $p < .01$) meaning that people who take initiative tend to have better self control. In addition, there was also a positive correlation with delayed gratification and people who are

successful in their careers ($r = .589$, $p < .01$), meaning that successful professionals are able to resist instant gratification. There was also some correlation with proactive personality and success in one's career ($r = .481$, $p < .01$), meaning that some initiative was used, albeit with more self-control the desired outcome was achieved.

Regression Analysis

Table 3

Multiple Regression Predicting Career Success

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Delayed Gratification	0.759	0.123	.499	6.15	<.001
Proactive Personality	0.193	0.122	.128	1.58	.116

Model Summary: $R^2 = .355$, $F(2,197) = 54.28$, $p < .001$

Description:

The results of the regression showed that the independent variable of delayed gratification, positively predicted success in one's career ($\beta = .499$, $p < .001$), meaning that the more one practices self discipline, the faster they'll achieve success. On the other hand, the proactive personality was not a positive predictor of success in the

differentiated analysis ($\beta = .128$, $p = .116$). This only means that in terms of success, proactivity does not have positive influence, only optimistically correlates, and that the positive influence is largely contributed by the self discipline. This also means that proactive individuals only attain success in the long run when they are able to control their unnecessary impulses and are able to think long term.

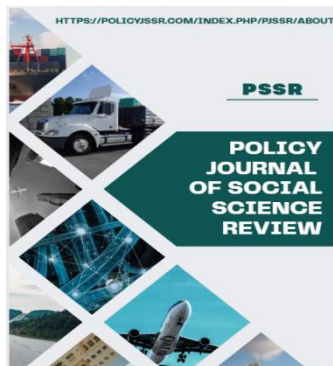
Mediation Analysis

Table 4

Direct and Indirect Effects of Proactive Personality on Career Success

Effect	Coefficient	SE	95% CI (LL, UL)	p
Direct Effect	0.193	0.122	-0.05, 0.43	.116
Indirect Effect	0.533	0.089	0.36, 0.71	<.01

Bootstrap samples = 5000; CI = Confidence Interval



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Description:

Mediation analysis by bootstrapping substantiates that the ability to delay instant rewards fully mediates the relation between proactive personality and career success. The direct effect of proactive personality on career success was not

One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Table 5

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Between Groups	28.432	2	14.216	12.75
Within Groups	218.221	197	1.107	
Total	246.653	199		

$p < .001$. Dependent variable: Subjective Career Success. Grouping variable: Levels of Delayed Gratification.

Description:

In the context of delayed gratification, ANOVA shown significant variances in career success across the levels ($F = 12.75$, $p < .001$). IT professionals with high levels of delayed gratification reported the greatest career satisfaction, while those with low levels reported the least. This observation underlines the importance of patience and having a long-term orientation in career focus and in the achievement of significant career outcomes, especially in the IT industry.

Discussion

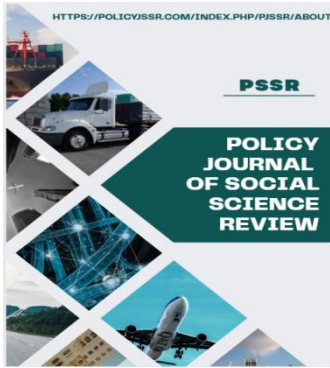
The findings validate the theory that proactive personality traits positively correlate with both subjective career success and the ability to delay gratification.

significant, while the delayed effect was positive and significant. This illustrates that proactive individuals with the ability to delay instant rewards and focus on long-term professional development are more likely to achieve higher career satisfaction.

Nevertheless, regression and mediation analyses indicate that it is delayed gratification, rather than proactive personality, that more reliably predicts career satisfaction. The mediation model shows that proactive personality traits contribute to career success mostly by enhancing self-control and the ability to think long-term.

These findings are consistent with global research (Mischel et al., 1989; Duckworth & Seligman, 2005) and expand the research conducted in Pakistan by confirming the mediating role of delayed gratification among IT professionals.

This further develops the work done by Seibert et al. (1999) and Crant (2000) with the focus on proactivity by adding that proactive tendencies need self-regulated processes in order to achieve long-term satisfaction.



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This corroboration was asserted by the more recent studies where Li et al. (2020) demonstrated proactivity predicts career satisfaction through job crafting. Further, Kim et al. (2022) connected proactivity to promotability, but only in the context of strong persistence support. Geng et al. (2021) confirmed career persistence and mediated the relationship with delayed gratification. These observations advance the self-regulation findings that our study corroborated.

Recent research has reinforced these insights: Li, Liang, and Crant (2020) demonstrated that proactivity predicted career satisfaction through job crafting in China, while Kim, Oh, and Kim (2022) found that proactive tendencies enhanced promotability in South Korean IT professionals.

Theoretical Contribution:

This study incorporates proactive personality along with self-regulation within the framework of the Career Construction Theory, emphasizing the dual requirement of initiative and steadfast effort for success and career advancement.

Practical Implications:

It is recommended that companies enable development of not only proactive behaviors but also long-term goal orientation and impulse control. Resilience and self-control could be integrated into technical assessments as part of HR evaluation frameworks.

Limitations:

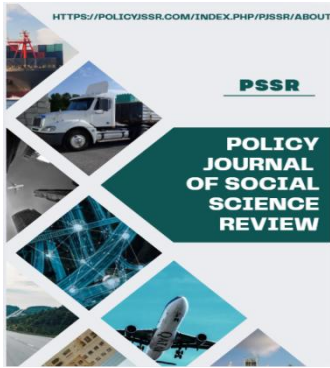
Causal inference is limited by cross-sectional design. Use of self-report instruments raises social desirability bias issues. Longitudinal and multi-source approaches would enhance research quality.

Conclusion:

This study shows that the Pakistani IT sector exhibits proactive personality traits and subjective career success through the mediation of delayed gratification. While self-driven traits encourage the seizing of opportunities, enduring self-control guarantees that these opportunities are transformed into lasting satisfaction. Therefore, in demanding fields, the ability to be patient and persistent may outstrip the need to be proactive.

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