

# Gender at Work: Does it Matter?

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## Abstract

Gender equality in career success has become a focus area in recent years. The purpose of this paper was to measure the extent to which identified factors influence the career success experienced by men and women are the same.

The target population comprised of 243 employed persons, across gender, ethnicity and within South Africa. For purposes of this paper, a quantitative approach was employed by means of a self-administered online survey. The main findings suggest that in respect to gender, there were no differences in the responses to the factors. Differences were however found in Ethnicity, Age, Religion, Marital Status and Number of Children.

This paper contributes to the body of knowledge on experienced career success and provides practical strategies that can be used by individuals and organisations to promote an environment of inclusivity and equality in which individuals can flourish and experience success.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

Men often achieve higher career status, options and opportunities and earn more than women (Allen, French and Pateet, 2016). While it is believed that women face additional personal and professional barriers such as a lack of exposure to empowerment, inclusivity, career advancement, developmental and promotional opportunities as well as discrimination, status, religion, cultural practices and stereotypes (Manzi, 2019; Bosch, 2017).

Although progress has been made in reducing the gender gap, it remains a global priority, as women do not enjoy similar opportunities awarded to men (Nova, 2019). Regardless of more women being in pursuit of educational and employment opportunities, they remain less likely to participate in the labour market (Espino et al., 2019). As a result, Google, Facebook and Pinterest have taken further steps to advancing women in their spaces by utilising Human Resource Management strategies. Facebook and Pinterest have for example, ensured that at least one woman is interviewed for available positions (Noe, 2020).

South Africa has shown progress in relation to gender equality largely because of the equal educational opportunities, employment and labour laws and less restrictive social norms. While the gender gap has become smaller in developing countries, women still work mostly within the informal employment sector as contributing family workers rather than in mainstream positions such as management (Espino et al., 2019).

Organisations as a result have placed various strategies in place to improve the career trajectories and success of women, which includes but is not limited to the following: learning and development opportunities (Shockley et al., 2016), networking opportunities (Spurk et al., 2019), supportive work environments (Chinomona, Popoola and Imuezerua, 2016; Ahmad et al., 2019), and mentoring and coaching (Helms, Arfken and Bellar, 2016; Johns, 2013).

Gender role socialisation and other biological and cultural factors drive gender differences. In a culture or social system, various roles and accompanying expectations, are assigned (Lynch, 2007). These roles are distinct between genders as evident in studies conducted on gender stereotypes. For example, males are described as dominant, strong and independent whereas females are emotional, weak and submissive (Segalo, 2015). Gender-perspective theory theorises that gender determines skill, ability, interest and behaviour. Further to this, men are perceived as more competent when compared to women (Afande, 2015). These findings can be framed against research by Hofstede (2011), who identified cultural dimensions, such as power distance, masculinity and femininity and collectivism and individualism amongst others, that define behaviours in society.

Gender to Kelland (2015), in accordance to culture represents the behavioural expectations of men and women. Culture, societal norms and attitudes influence gender roles from a young age. In many cultures or religions, biological aspects are used to determine and promote these roles. For example, in some cultures, the physical build of a man is generally bigger and stronger than that of a woman, therefore men are better suited to hunt and fight. Similarly, women should take care of and nurse their offspring. Additionally, certain personality traits are associated with men and women. Men are portrayed as aggressive whilst women are more focused on relationships (Afande, 2015; Kelland, 2015). Forouton (2009) suggests a link between the employment of women and attitudes regarding gender roles. Gender differences therefore exist in socialisation and in upbringing. Girls are taught to be obedient, passive and considerate. In society, women do not hold the same positions and roles as men. Their roles are often less prestigious and they are socially dominated within a patriarchal system of beliefs.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

The background gives rise to the main problem of this paper, which is to determine whether the factors influencing experienced success are applicable across gender.

## **1.3. Research objectives**

The research objective of this paper is to determine the factors influencing the experienced success of men and women in South Africa.

The next section provides a review of the literature in relation to career success, the factors influencing success and including gender and success. Thereafter, the methodology, main findings and discussion points relating to the responses of the participants will be elaborated upon. Lastly, the way forward and the management implications will be highlighted.

## **2. Literature Review**

Having stated the background to this paper, the next section provides a literature review of the key constructs and includes seminal sources in career success.

### **2.1. Career Success**

Career success can be defined as the achievement of long term goals (Balcerzyk, 2017); the sum of accomplishments in social roles or in a given field (Metelski, 2019); an individual's experience of achieving meaningful goals (Dries, 2011); or a collection of an individual's positive work-related and psychological outcomes (Judge et al., 1995). Career success can be viewed from an objective and subjective perspective.

Objective career success can be observed, measured and verified such as salary and status, whereas subjective career success, are the feelings of satisfaction in one's career (Tlaiss, 2019; Chinyamurindi,

2016; Abele and Spurk, 2009; Dries, Pepermans and Rypens, 2009). Objective career success indicators are considered to be more career specific (Metelski, 2019).

More recently, the focus on career success has shifted from an objective view (objective, observed, external locus of control) to a subjective view (subjective, internal locus of control) on the basis that people have different views, values, beliefs and perceptions of success which is then used as a frame of reference to evaluate themselves (Tlaiss, 2019). Subjective career success is further described by Chauhan, Mishra and Bhakri (2022) as the reaction the individual has towards their career experience.

In a study in Korea on the career success of male and female executives it is interesting to note that the majority of the male executives defined career success based on achievement, promotion, recognition, or position, which is more aligned to objective career success. On the other hand, the majority of the female executives defined career success as having a work-life balance, having a focus on relationships, and personal growth, which aligns itself to subjective career success (Cho, Park, Han, Ju, You, Ju, Park and Park, 2017). These findings are similar to Western studies indicating that men lean towards an objective view of career success whilst women share a more subjective view of career success.

Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) found that both objective and subjective views should be recognised as career success. Approximately 800 employees were instructed to allocate importance to 15 success indicators. The results of the study showed that a combination of subjective and objective dimensions comprise career success. These are status, leisure time, challenge, security and social factors. On this basis, it can be deduced that aside from status, the remaining dimensions are linked to subjective career success. Also, it can be assumed that objective indicators such as pay, promotion and prestige do not necessarily make one successful.

Drewery, Sproule and Pretti (2020) explain that many studies focusing on the antecedents of career success includes “personal resources, agentic and proactive behaviours and stable traits”. It is assumed that the more proactive the individual, the more likely they will engage in behaviours that may lead to their success. Drewery et al. (2020), based on research from Spurk et al. (2019), Serbet et al. (2001) and Crant (2000), suggests that career success is a result of an individual’s personality, self-perception, work itself and approach to work.

For this paper, experienced success refers to the subjective view of individuals based on their perception of experienced career success considering internal and external factors to success.

## **2.2 Factors influencing career success**

Various factors promote or inhibit career success in the workplace. Studies identifying and exploring the factors influencing the career success of women exist. However, limited studies exist on the career success of men.

The focus of career success, over the years has been on identifying predictors of success. Studies by Culpan and Wright (2002); Valcour and Ladge (2008); Spurk and Abele (2011); Doubell and Struwig (2014); Afande (2015); Turunen and Muoniovaara (2015) and Shockley et al. (2016) provide insight into how organisational strategies, personal attributes, life events and perceptions of success enable individuals to succeed within their careers.

Ng and Feldman (2014b) studied the correlates of subjective career success and further sub-divided the correlates into background-related, trait-related, motivational, skill-related, social network and organisational and job factors, all of which aligns to career satisfaction. These factors speak to both internal (motivation, skill, personality) and external (support, organisation and job).

Hirschi (2012 in Hirschi et al., 2018), proposed a career resources model, which included four types of resources individuals could use to achieve success; human capital, social capital, psychological and career. These resources comprise both internal and external factors that if available contributes to the career success of individuals. Spurk et al. (2019) further indicates that the availability or lack of personal resources such as personality, knowledge, skill, experience and self-esteem could promote or hinder career success. Further to this, the authors posit that subjective career success can be understood by focusing on resource management behaviours and attributes, and personal attributes.

Personal or individual factors drive individuals to perform, such as a high level of self-efficacy, demographics, personality traits, self-confidence, assertiveness and decisiveness and having a greater need for achievement (Doubell and Struwig, 2014). Additional, positive factors also include personal relationships with family, a positive attitude, age, experience and core self-evaluation which imply that an individual's belief in themselves is tied to their competence (Afande, 2015; Turunen and Muoniovaara, 2015).

External factors refer to those outside to the individual. As previously alluded to, these include familial support, organisational support, networking, types of employment opportunities presented to men and women, organisational culture and gender bias (Hirschi et al., 2018, Bosch, 2017; van der Walt et al., 2016; Ng and Feldman, 2014b, Reeves et al., 2012). Women however, experience additional personal and professional challenges compared to men, which could influence their behaviour and act as a barrier to their success in the workplace.

### **2.3 Gender and success**

According to Frear et al. (2019), the career success routes taken by women and men differ. Women have additional barriers to overcome to be successful and these include cultural, societal, legal and other gender-specific norms and stereotypes leading to the gender gap (Evers and Sieverding, 2014). Generally, the success of an individual is measured by comparing individuals from a similar standing, for example the same or similar age group, profession and industry. However, gender studies on career success, uses unequal attributes and unequal effects to explain gender differences in relation to success.

On the one hand, unequal attributes are indicative that gender relates to additional attributes which results in unequal career outcomes. On the other hand, unequal effects suggest that even in cases of equal merit, men are rewarded differently. This implies that irrespective of individual attributes and effort, the outcome remains unequal between men and women.

According to Evers and Sieverding (2014), gender-specific norms explains the gender gap with reference to success. Gender-specific beliefs and responsibilities influences educational and career related expectations and outcomes (Dicke, Safavian and Eccles, 2019). Often, emphasis is placed on the career paths of males, which is reverberated in social identities, future roles and goals of men and women.

According to Melamed (1996), the determinants of career success can be separated into three categories which are discussed below:

- Human capital attributes;
- The career options; and
- Opportunity structures.

Irrespective of gender, educational attainment improves the likelihood of climbing the career ladder and obtaining career success. Additionally, human capital attributes play a role in experiencing career success. Various studies (Tabassum and Nayak, 2021; Hentschel, Heilman and Peus, 2019; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell and Ristikari, 2011) associate assertiveness, competitiveness, ambition, confidence and a desire for responsibility with successful leadership roles. These traits are typically perceived as masculine tendencies. Therefore, women experience additional pressure to conform to masculine ways of thinking, which implies that for women to be taken seriously, they should possess the confidence, competence and assertiveness (Pullen and Vachhani, 2018).

Individuals are active participants in their careers, however, the career choices made by individuals are still gender specific to some extent (Rocha and Van Praag, 2020). Even though changes have been made and equality is a work in progress, many still conform to this way of thinking, where women should choose more feminine careers and the same applies to men. Women who make certain career choices, with the relevant skill set, knowledge, competence and confidence, it may be assumed that by merit, they would be on par with their male counterparts. This is however not the case and the gender gap is still evident.

Opportunity structures refers to those opportunities available to individuals within a social context. Macro-societal structures support more men than women and includes, changes in demographics, education and labour market demands (Melamed, 1996). Intermediate-organisational structures on the other hand focuses on the offerings, promotional opportunities, structure and size at the organisation of

employment. At a micro-occupational level, aspects related to the job are emphasised including the type of job, power attached to the job and the level of importance attached to the job.

### **3. Research Methodology**

A **positivist, epistemological** philosophical approach was used in this paper. Quantitative data collection and analysis were conducted to address the main problem and determine correlational relationships among factors influencing experienced career success. A self-administering survey was used to measure the extent to which the identified factors influence the experienced career success of men and women in the South African context.

A descriptive and explorative research design was employed. A descriptive research design was used to describe the status of experienced career success of men and women and a correlational research design was used to determine whether significant relationships exist between the identified variables and how these variables impact each other.

#### **Research method**

This paper is part of a bigger national study, where a mixed-method approach was utilised. However, for purposes of this paper, only the quantitative results will be examined and discussed.

#### **Population sample and data collection**

Non-probability sampling methods were utilised for this study. Convenience and snowball sampling allowed for greater reach and scope of respondents and, was particularly useful as this is a national study. Two-hundred and forty-three respondents participated in this study across gender, religion, occupation and geographical area within South Africa. For noting more women (73%) than men (27%) participated in the survey.

#### **Administration of the survey**

Upon obtaining ethical clearance, an ethics clearance number was issued and the online survey could commence as scheduled. A detailed procedure was conducted to reach the number of respondents required to perform adequate analysis and inferences. This included an emailed link to personal and professional networks as well as utilising different social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook and WhatsApp.

#### **Measuring instrument**

A self-administering survey was utilised as the measuring instrument and included different sections. Internal factors focusing on motivational influences; Social factors; Family factors and Organisational factors, which highlighted support, resources, career, development, culture and multiple roles. Organisational Success Strategies, which referred to the organisational strategies currently in place and which they were aware of, at their place of employment. Respondents were also required to indicate the extent to which they have been exposed to the strategies. The independent variables comprise of the

factors mentioned above. Lastly, success indicators, the dependent variable focused on the predictors of career success including materialistic, social and status predictors.

A self-administering online survey was developed with existing scales using Likert-type questions. The Self-Efficacy Survey by Sherer, Maddux, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs and Rogers (1982); the Self-Concept Survey by Robson, Shaver and Wrightsman (2013); the Assertiveness Formative Questionnaire by Gaumer Erickson, Noonan, Monroe and McCall (2016); the Interpersonal Guilt Questionnaire by O'Connor, Berry, Weiss, Bush and Sampson (1997); *A Practical Guide to Measuring Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Impact Evaluations* Hirschi, Nagy, Baumeler, Johnston and Spurk (2018) were consulted and utilised.

### Validity and reliability considerations

Table 1 presents the Cronbach's Alpha of the factors. Internal (0.653) and external factors (0.72) measured the lowest and family (0.902), organisation (0.936), organisational success strategies (0.919) and success indicators (0.866) reflect high internal consistency.

**Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha**

Factor	Number of items	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Internal Factors	5	0.653
Social Factors	4	0.72
Family Factors	9	0.902
Organisational Factors	12	0.936
Organisational Success Strategies	20	0.919
Success Indicators	10	0.866

An item was removed from one of the factors, external factors, thus increasing the Cronbach  $\alpha$  from 0.66 to 0.72. All of the factors therefore obtained an alpha of 0.6 and above, deeming it reliable (Cassim, 2011; Cooper and Schindler, 2009; Hair et al., 2006).

### 3.1. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

- $H_0$ : There is no difference in the responses of women and men in relation to the factors contributing to experienced career success.
- $H_1$ : There is a difference in the responses of women and men in relation to the factors contributing to experienced career success.

Based on the main problem, objective and hypotheses, it was determined that success indicators are the dependant variable and the factors influencing the experienced career success of men and women, the independent variables.

### 3.2. Ethics

Ethical considerations such as confidentiality, fairness, anonymity and disclosure of information were applied. Full ethical clearance was granted from the Nelson Mandela University (H21-BES-BUS-066). Furthermore, all participants could withdraw at any stage and were not obligated to participate in the study and informed consent was obtained from the participants.

## 4. Results and Findings

The next section of this paper focuses on the findings and analysis.

### 4.1 Demographic information

Majority of the respondents were female (73%), Coloured (54%), between the ages of 25-34 years old (37%), in possession of a degree (22.5%) and Christian (48%). Osman Ibnouf (2015) stated that developing countries such as South Africa have made progress regarding gender equality in respect of education whereby more equal educational opportunities are awarded to women.

### 4.2 Factor scores

Table 2 reflects the summarised mean scores for sections A-E of the survey. The cumulative mean scores reflected agree responses, excluding Success Indicators which attained a mean score of 3.1, implying neither agree nor disagree. In addition, the standard deviation per section is included. As can be seen from Table 2, the standard deviations of all the sections in the survey measured below 1 which is suggestive that low variances between the responses in this survey were noted.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Factors	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Organisational Success Strategies	243	1	3.85	1.8045	0.76019
Family Factors	243	1	3.67	1.6212	0.55583
Organisational Factors	243	1	4	1.7484	0.58923
Internal Factors	243	1	3	1.8938	0.43134
Social Factors	242	1	4	2.0055	0.55623
Success Indicators	240	1	3.1	1.7284	0.47059
Valid N (listwise)	239				

### 4.3 Exploratory Factor Analysis

The independent and dependent variables were exposed to an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Five factors (independent variable items) and one factor (dependent variable) were extracted using principal axis factoring. This was then used for further analysis. KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used on the independent and dependent variables. The analysis showed a KMO value of 0.825 and a BTS

value significant at 0 ( $p < 0.05$ ), which implied that the sampling was adequate, and the data suitable to perform an EFA on the independent variables. For the dependent variable, the KMO measured 0.835 with a significance of  $p < .001$ , indicative that an EFA may be conducted. All but one variable loaded, and this factor was removed.

On conclusion of the KMO and BTS tests, a factor rotation was conducted to improve interpretation. The Promax with Kaiser Normalisation method was used for the independent variables PFA. Based on the EFA, five factors emerged using the Promax with Kaiser Normalisation. Additionally, the five factors describe 45.762 of the variance in the responses. All items that loaded onto the factors were 0.3 or higher, the lowest 0.444 and the highest at 0.869. Loadings above 0.3 indicate a moderate correlation between the item loaded and the factor (Tavakol and Wetzel, 2020). Moreover, two items were removed as negative items imply a poor fit to the factors.

Five factors were identified as part of the independent variables. The nature of the variables loading onto each factor was considered and the factors were subsequently labelled as follows:

Factor 1: Internal Factors

Factor 2: Social Factors

Factor 3: Family Factors

Factor 4: Organisational Factors

Factor 5: Organisational Success Strategies

#### 4.4 Pearson Moment Correlation

Table.3: Pearson Moment Correlations

Factors	Organisational Success Strategies	Family Factors	Organisational Factors	Internal Factors	Social Factors	Success Indicators
Organisational Success Strategies	1	.169**	.522**	.182**	0.055	.384**
Family Factors		1	.187**	.185**	.226**	.176**
Organisational Factors			1	.206**	.133*	.390**
Internal Factors				1	0.124	.526**
Social Factors					1	.133*
Success Indicators						1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

As shown in Table 3, various relationships existed between the factors. Organisational Success Strategies (OSS) correlated with Family Factors (FF) (.169), Organisational Factors (OF) (.522), Internal Factors (IF) (.182) and Success Indicators (SI) (.384). For noting, a strong correlation existed between OSS and OF. This implies that the importance placed on OF influenced the level of awareness

and exposure to career advancement strategies and vice versa. In order for employees to therefore experience career success, adequate emphasis from top management must be placed on OF as employees will perceive this as legitimate and as a result show greater commitment to the organisation and to the advancement of their careers (Al Balushi, Thumiki, Nawaz, Jurcic and Gajenderan, 2022; Chinomona et al., 2016). Additionally, a moderate relationship existed between OSS and SI, thus implying that the more awareness and exposure employees are provided with, the greater the success experienced by employees (Arifin, Raza, Saputra and Puteh, 2020).

In respect of Family Factors (FF) and all the other variables, weaker relationships were noted. Organisational Factors (OF) showed similar, except for OF and SI (.390) which showed a moderate correlation between the factors. As previously mentioned, the greater the importance placed on OF, the greater the success of employees.

Internal Factors (IF) showed a strong correlation with Success Indicators (SI) (.526). This indicates that motivation plays a role in the success of individuals. As literature states, the higher the level of motivation experienced by an individual, the greater the success (Bergh, 2017; Afande, 2015; Doubell and Struwig, 2014). Lastly, Social Factors (SF) showed a small relationship with Success Indicators (SI) (.133).

Internal factors as per the survey, comprised of motivational factors. After analysing the data in this section of the survey and acknowledging that most of the respondents were women, it was important to note the number of responses mentioning level of agreement with others, feelings of guilt, being the point of reference to others, difficulty in expressing oneself and reaching a state of happiness only if others are happy. These attributes are often associated with women (Harcar, 2017; Hofstede, 2011; Weisberg, DeYoung and Hirsh, 2011; Oelofse, 2007).

Employees who are motivated, exhibit higher levels of commitment and performance (Georgellis, Iossa and Tabvuma, 2011). As previously suggested, intrinsic motivation is the innate motivation within individuals driving performance, whereas extrinsic motivation is external to the individual and refers to results (Putra, Cho and Liu, 2017).

Self-motivation, feelings of satisfaction, passion, desire to succeed and a sense of achievement, are all considered intrinsic motivators (Afande, 2015; Turunen and Muoniovaara, 2015; Doubell and Struwig, 2014). Family, including children and financial independence or rewards are considered extrinsic motivators (Chauhan et al., 2022; Tlaiss, 2019; Chinyamurindi, 2016). This suggests that motivation plays a role in overall success, both in a personal and professional capacity.

Social Factors included personal, religious and societal views regarding women. Most of the respondents agreed to the statements including:

- Commitment to their religious teachings (91.3%);

- Understanding the status of women as per their religion (96.3%);
- Societal views impact the various roles and responsibilities of men and women – at work (68.8%) and at home (75.5%);
- Voices of women in society are important (99.2%); and
- Religion influences behaviour (78.1%).

South Africa is a religious country (Loubser and Kotze, 2017) and according to Schnabel's (2016) study, the more religious the country, the greater the gender divide. Additionally, South Africa scored high on power distance, which implies a patriarchal society, which may influence the treatment of and behaviour towards women (Nomvele, 2021) and men.

The results show that religion influences how people think, feel and act and society determine the roles of women and men in general and in the work context. In addition, the statement referring to a wife obeying her husband received notable attention as more than 20% of the respondents indicated agreement. In a study by Davis and Greenstein (2009), it was reported that relationships exist between the patriarchal beliefs held by women or their partners and work, housework and childcare.

Family factors focused on support from family and the dynamics within families. Respondents felt that they had the support of their family, including their spouse in their career and life. A study by Heikkinen, Lämsä and Hiillos (2014), highlighted that spouses who willingly breaks the traditional gender roles and provide their partners with support has a positive influence on their careers.

Interestingly, the older women are, the less support they receive from their spouses (Schwarzer and Gutierrez-Dona, 2005). Taking the majority age group that participated in this study into consideration, it could be assumed that should older women have been the majority, the results would be different. Less than 20% of participants indicated that gender bias is an issue. According to Lynch (2007), gender role socialisation, biological, cultural and other factors are driving forces behind gender differences.

Organisational factors, as measured in the survey, include support from supervisor and colleagues, inclusivity, mentoring, religious freedom, training and development. Respondents answered favourably regarding the importance placed on these items at their respective organisations. For noting, the highest level of disagreement included gender balance, fairness and career advancement. All of the items measured in this section contribute towards career growth and development. As such it becomes important for organisations to commit to various interventions. Kundu and Lata (2017) postulate that employees are attracted to organisations that provide supportive environments for effective career development. Kassian in Roach (2003) suggests that as much as men and women are equal, roles and duties that are gender specific examples include men as the individuals earning and providing for the family and women taking care of the household.

Organisations have attempted to put mechanisms in place to promote the career advancement of women by ensuring a more supportive environment in which they can flourish (Chinomona et al., 2016). van der Walt et al. (2016) and Abu Bakar et al. (2012) posit that inequality and discrimination are factors inhibiting the career advancement of women. It was interesting to note that the term patriarchal was used to describe the culture at a South African organisation. Dryding (2019), in his analysis of the Afrobarometer Survey (2018) noted that less than half of the men surveyed promoted gender equality, and more than half of the men believed that being employed is better suited to males than females. The above describes a patriarchal society which has an influence on society in general as well as on the culture at some organisations, as evident in some of the responses.

Regarding the stance an organisation takes on the advancement of women, equal opportunities stood out. Dicke et al. (2019) based on the works of Larsen and Long (1988), as well as Brewster and Padavic (2000), posit that emphasis is placed on the career trajectory of males rather than that of women.

Organisational Success Strategies measured two aspects namely, awareness of current career-related interventions and exposure to the interventions identified. The first part focused on the respondents' awareness of the identified strategies and was overall positive, which implies that more than 70% of the respondents were aware of all the strategies at their organisations. Regarding the level of exposure to the interventions, respondents answered more negatively with more than 20% indicating that they were either rarely or never exposed to interventions. As per the literature, if these interventions are present, and adequate exposure takes place, success will be greater (Helms et al., 2016; Turunen and Muoniovaara, 2015; Johns, 2013; Culpan and Wright, 2002; Loutfi, 2001).

Success indicators, in the instance of this study, emphasised the predictors of career success and focused on materialistic, social and status predictors. The majority of the responses were favourable towards success, with combined positive scores of greater than 90%. Based on the responses, these individuals felt engaged, were confident in their range of skills and expertise, and could manage their careers or any career-related challenges. Interestingly, the two items with the largest disagreement were attachment to work and work being central to their identity.

Melamed (1996) stated that career success is dependent on numerous factors, including human capital attributes, career options and opportunity structures. This alludes to experience, knowledge, skills and education being important, active participation in respect of one's career and lastly, the opportunities available. Osemeke and Adegboyega (2017), in addition and based on McClelland's theory, theorise that certain characteristics are evident in those with a need to achieve as taking ownership, being accountable, having a sense resourcefulness and having a lifelong learning mentality. Rijal and Wasti (2018) further state that investment in education and skills development influence success. The theoretical underpinnings (McKinsey & Co: *Women in the Workplace Report 2021*; Carrim and

Moolman, 2021; Bardekjian et al., 2019; Abu Bakar et al., 2012) of this study are aligned with the responses above.

#### **4.5 Independent t-tests and ANOVA**

Using the demographic variables, differences were found in Ethnicity, Age, Religion, Marital Status and Number of Children. The results of the independent Sample t-tests and One-way ANOVAs were used to determine if there were any differences in the average scores, in relation to the biographical data obtained from the respondents. As previously mentioned, only biographical data with three or more categories were used. In addition, the various stages of ANOVA testing have been elaborated on. The results are discussed below.

##### **Ethnicity**

It was found that significant differences existed between Ethnicity and Social Factors (SF). Using the Tukey HSD test, the differences identified were between the Coloured and White cohorts ( $p=0.059$ ). Based on the analysis, it is clear that the Coloured cohort scored lower (mean=1.9539;  $sd=0.4817$ ) than the White cohort (mean=2.2303;  $sd=0.63241$ ). This means that there was a greater level of agreement within the Coloured cohort than the White cohort. The Coloured agreed more than the White cohort that social factors were important in the perceived success of women.

##### **Age**

The ANOVA results showed differences between the Age category and Internal Factors (IF). With further analysis, this time using the Games-Howell test, the differences were highlighted between the age groups of 18-24 and 55+ years ( $p=0.047$ ) and 35-44 and 55+ years ( $p=0.006$ ). Using the descriptive statistics to assist in the interpretation of the data, it was found that the 18 – 24 year cohort scored ( $m=2.2$ ;  $sd=0.47958$ ), the 34 - 44 year cohort scored ( $m=2.1146$ ;  $sd=0.50682$ ) and the 55+ cohort scored ( $m=1.81$ ;  $sd=0.27125$ ). These results indicated that the 55+ cohort scored significantly lower than the other two cohorts which suggested that agreement was greater within this cohort.

##### **Religion – Internal and Social Factors**

Regarding Religion, differences in respect of two factors were noted: Internal Factors (IF) showing a  $p$  value of 0.005 and Social Factors (SF) with a  $p$  value of  $<0.001$ . The descriptive statistics showed the scores of the Muslim cohort ( $m=2.1294$ ;  $sd=0.05314$ ) and the Christian cohort ( $m=1.9418$ ;  $sd=0.4231$ ). This indicated that with the Internal Factors (IF), the standard deviation was higher for the Muslim cohort and as a result implied less agreement between the responses than those of the Christian cohort. Social Factors (SF), however, revealed that the Muslim cohort ( $m=1.8023$ ;  $sd=0.42893$ ) scored less than the Christian cohort ( $m=2.0711$ ;  $sd=0.53043$ ) and the Other cohort ( $m=2.6974$ ;  $sd=0.62126$ ), which suggested that the level of agreement between the responses in respect of the Social Factors (SF) was higher within the Muslim cohort.

## **Marital Status**

Differences were noted between Marital Status and Social Factors (SF). Differences were identified between the single and married cohorts in relation to Social Factors ( $p=0.006$ ). Moreover, the data suggested, with the use of descriptive statistics, that even though the mean scores were higher for the single cohort, the standard deviation showed the level of agreement in the responses to the Social Factors (SF) as lower for the married cohort, thus suggesting greater agreement within the single cohort.

## **Number of Children and Social Factors**

Differences were revealed between the Number of Children and Social Factors (SF). With a  $p$  value of 0.005, differences were noted between those who selected having no children and those who selected three or more children, showing a  $p$  value of 0.005. Furthermore, the descriptive statistics indicated that those specifying three or more children ( $m=1.725$ ;  $sd=0.43722$ ) scored lower than the cohort specifying no children ( $m=2.1311$ ;  $sd=0.55178$ ), thus implying greater levels of agreement within the cohort of three or more children and the Social Factors (SF) variable.

Of importance, it was noted that in *respect to gender, no differences and no significance were found.*

In relation to the hypotheses presented, the following is highlighted:

- $H_0$ : There is no difference in the responses of women and men in relation to the factors contributing to experienced career success.

The null hypothesis is *accepted*.

- $H_1$ : There is a difference in the responses of women and men in relation to the factors contributing to experienced career success.

The alternate hypothesis is therefore *rejected*.

## **5. Managerial Implications**

The results from this study show that the way in which the respondents answered and viewed the statements relating to career success including the factors influencing career success were the same between gender. That said, organisations need to move away from treating women differently. The more these women are treated differently, the greater the divide. Individuals should therefore move up the ranks, not because of gender, but on merit, having the skill, knowledge, capability and experience required to do the job. However, differences in terms of other demographical factors were noted. These are important in that not all (age, religion and race) groups have the same internal locus of control or commitment and therefore strategies should take into consideration these demographic differences.

In addition, the following is highlighted:

### **Individual**

- As a starting point, individuals should reflect on their personal resources such as their ability, confidence, experiences and levels of motivation with the aim of identifying their own strengths and weaknesses. It then makes it easier to identify strategies to improve problem areas and strengthen or maintain stronger areas. It is important to note that, an organisation can provide all the necessary resources to succeed, but if individuals do not have the drive to improve, no movement in respect to career development and ultimately their success will occur.
- It is important for individuals to be involved in the development of an individual career plan. This ensures greater commitment towards their jobs, the organisation and their career success.

### **Organisational**

- The factors identified can assist organisations in developing a framework on career success. This framework focusing on the factors may provide insight into the application of systems that can promote career success across gender, such as aligning career development to performance management systems.
- It was found that the more the importance of organisational factors is emphasised, the greater the awareness of the resources available, the greater the career success. That said, TMC (Top Management Commitment) to the promotion and growth of individuals will influence and legitimises the perception individuals have of these interventions.
- Skill, knowledge and expertise (personal factors) play a role in experiencing career satisfaction, and success. Organisations therefore need to inculcate a culture of lifelong learning and development which constantly trains and re-trains employees, preparing them for advancement and success.
- Relationships with supervisors, supportive environments, learning and development, networking, career-related strategies such as mentoring and coaching have been highlighted as external factors to career success. Studies have repeatedly shown that women and men who are exposed to the above, are more likely to succeed. On this basis, organisations need to make a conscious effort to create the space for this to happen.

## **6. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research**

This paper provides an analysis of career success and including the factors that may promote or inhibit the experienced career success of individuals. The theoretical framework suggests that even though strides have been made in the promotion of women, a gender divide still exists. This paper however, found that no differences in the responses were evident between the male and female cohort, different to other studies. Additionally, the main findings suggest that internal factors (.526) strongly correlate

to the career success experienced by individuals and that the more importance placed on organisational factors such as support, resources and opportunities, the greater the awareness and exposure to organisational success strategies, thus leading to success. It would be of interest for purposes of future research to open this study to a larger male cohort with the aim of establishing whether the results would remain the same.

In summary, for individuals to experience career success, they are required to draw on their available resources in a personal and professional context. This means that the level of belief in oneself, skill and ability, experience as well as utilising the support available from the organisation will promote the experienced career success of individuals, making them more satisfied in their jobs.

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