Managerial Career Success In Highly Political Organization

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ABSTRACT: *The study of factors that influence career success in the organization has a long history in management. Considering organization as political arena, little research considers to study the associate between career success and high level of organizational politics. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to review the literature and develop a model of career success. This model could be applied as a framework for managers to develop their career attainment in the highly political environment. This article will propose a political arena model of career success, using personality, skill and behaviour attributes, as predictors. Theory underpinning of this framework is based on the political theory of leadership and SCCT Theory. Previous research shows that many factors have been identified as predictors of career success, but there is inconclusive evidence in the relation to organizational politics to these factors. This paper examines the influence of personal characteristics factors and organizational politics on manager's intrinsic and extrinsic career success in the context of business organizations. Specifically, in line with literature-based analysis, a model that consists of three sets of predictor's variables: political personality traits, political skill, political behaviour, perception of politics influence career success of business managers was developed. The model illustrating the linkage between personality trait, behaviour, skill as predictor and political level as moderator needs to be tested empirically. The results thus will serve to improve organizational career planning management and can help individuals to manage their career in the business organization.*

KEYWORDS: *Business organization, organizational politics, career success, career development, managers*

I. INTRODUCTION

The study of career has been a popular research topic that has received much attention in career management literature since the late 1990s [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]. A large and growing body of studies has investigated career topic in the form of work outcomes, managerial advances, career attainment, career effectiveness, career advancement, career planning, career paths, and career barrier and career satisfaction. In recent years, there has been increasing amount of literature on career success. There were a number of models and frameworks have been proposed to explain the phenomena of career success from different perspective, but little is focused from political perspective. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to propose a model of career success from a political perspective. An underlying premise of this study is to view the business organization as a socio-political arena where individuals or special interest groups compete for resources and power. In 1985, Mintzberg [7] argued that performance, effectiveness, and career success in an organization are determined less by intelligence, personality, skill, and attitude but more by social skill and political behaviour. Therefore, the way to get ahead in an organizational career is to build social and political competence because business organizations are very complex political arenas. Surprisingly, the study on political behaviour, skill and personality not been comprehensively investigated. This study set out to develop a model that explains why some business managers are more successful in their careers than others. In sum, from an organizational political perspective based on Mintzberg argument, the question that will guide this review is: do the personal attributes in term of political personality traits, skill and behaviour of business managersinfluence their career success in highly political organization? Thus, this paper has the following objective: First, to investigate the influence of personal attributes in term of personality, skill, and behaviour from political perspective on career success. Second, to examine whether the personal attribute and career success relationship will moderate by organizational politics level.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Career success

To date career success topic still been discussed extensively in the academic field of career development literature. Scholars conceptualized career success is as an outcome of career attainment in terms of the objective and subjective dimension of achievement through an individual's career experiences [3,4,5]. Many definitions have been proposed to define career success in literature. In particular, career success refers to "the subjective and objective aspects of achievement and progress of an individual through an organization or occupation" [8]. Seibert, Crant, and Kraimer [9] define career success as "the real or the perceived positive psychological outcomes and work related achievements one has accumulated as a result of one's work experiences" (p. 846).

Similarly, RoziahMohdRasdi et al. [11] define career success "as the positive psychological or work-related outcomes, or personal and professional achievements an individual has gathered from their working experience"(p. 3529). Thus, for this study, career success is defined as accumulate subjective and objective achievement during occupation in an organization. However, career success is subjective concept where the judgments of career success depend on who does the judging [12]. The literature of career success have classified into two categories: Objective and subjective career success. Objective career success involves external measurement like number and how quick a promotion in the organizational hierarchy, a high salary, an increase in power and position. Furthermore, subjective career success is about the perception of own career development such as a feeling of satisfaction with the career. There is no single measure of career success. Therefore, there are different indicators for career success to different jobs. Ng et al in 2005 [13] had identified 26 predictors in four categories that influencing career success: human capital (Hours, Work centrality ,Job tenure, Organization tenure Work experience, Willingness to transfer, International experience, Education level, Political knowledge & skills, Social capital), organizational sponsorship (Career sponsorship, Supervisor support , Training & skill development opportunities, Organizational resources), socio-demographic (Gender, Race, Marital status, Age), and stable individual difference (Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, Openness to experience, activity, Locus of control). Since that, the studies of career success have been going on using varies predictors. In recent years, researchers have examined other predictors such as career attitude [14], career commitment [54], social skill [55], career history, mobility [57] and personality [8, 15]. To date, there are few studies that have investigated the association between career success an organizational politics.

2.2 Underlying Theories of Career Success Studies
Several theories serve as the theoretical basis underpinning the study of career success. However, many of the past research studies investigated career success using variables without considering the theoretically based variables. A recent study by Ishak [16] identified underpinning theories for study career success in literature: Human Capital Theory, Social Capital Theory, Career Congruence Theory, Super'stheory of Vocational Choice, The mobility theory, Social learning theory (SLT), Social Cognition Career Theory (SCCT), the social influence theory, and the political theory of leadership. However this model chooses Social Cognition Career Theory (SCCT) and the political theory of leadership as underpinning theories for the studies.

2.2.1 The political theory of leadership
A political theory of leadershiphad been proposed in 2002 [17]. This theory specifies that leader interpersonal characteristics (e.g. social capital, cognition, political will, and personality) would affect the political behaviour utilized by a leader.Both, Leader interpersonal characteristics and Political behaviour wouldaffect the important individual-level outcomes of the leader such as leader effectiveness, performance evaluation, promotion, and, reputation. Leader Political behaviour also act as a mediator to the relationship between leader interpersonal characteristicsand leader outcome. Specifically, a leaders' political behaviour will increase his or her organizational power, increase his or her interpersonal reputation, and earn him or her greater organizational rewards. Leader outcome also influences by political target person outcome in terms of affective, cognitive, attitude and performance. This theory also proposes that organization context in term of structure, culture, management level and episode would impact the political target person and leader outcome. Based on the theory, it is proposed that personality, social capital, and behaviour will influence career success (promotion, mobility, compensation). The political theory of leadership could be used as a theoretical basis for studying career success from a political perspective.
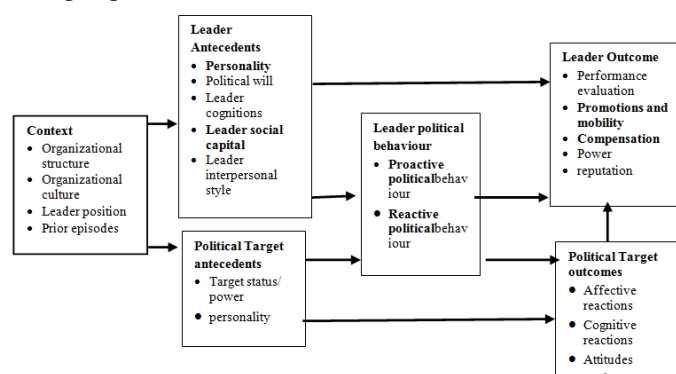

Figure 1.Thepolitical model of leadership. adapted from "Toward a political theory of leadership" by A. P. Ammeter, C., Douglas, W. L., Gardner, W. A., Hochwarter, & G. R., Ferris, (2002). *Leadership Quarterly,13,* 754 [17]

2.2.2 The Social Cognition Career Theory (SCCT)
Comparable theory addressing career success is the Social Cognition Career Theory (SCCT) proposed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett [18]. The SCCT and extended in 2000 based on Bandura's social cognitive theory. The social cognitive theory (SCT) is based on the social learning theory. SCT asserts that human behaviour is determined by, reciprocal interaction among three factors: (a) personal attributes, (b) behaviour, and (c) environment. Although the SCCT theory takes Bandura's SCT and connects it to career-related choices, plans, performance behaviours, and explorations, the SCCT focuses on the connection of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals that influence an individual's career choice. The SCCT posits that the cognitive-personal variables of self-efficacy beliefs, career outcome expectations, and career goals (intentions, plan, or aspiration to engage in a particular career direction) are key process in career development. Career choice is influenced by the beliefs the individual develops and is refined through four major sources: (a) personal performance accomplishments, (b) vicarious learning, (c) social persuasion, and (d) physiological states and reactions. The SCCT outlines the three interlocking processes by career interest, career-relevant choice and actions, and levels of career performance attainment. Two aspects of career attainment are: (a) the level of individual attainment in their work tasks (e.g. promotion, salary) and (b) the degree to which they stick around at a particular work activity (e.g. job satisfaction). Hence, SCCT provides a useful model for understanding the phenomenon of individual career success [11] Previously, RoziahMohdRasdi, et al [11]developed a theoretical framework for measuring public sector managers' career success using SCCT. They proposed four factors (individual, organizational, managerial competencies, and the person-environment fit) that predict the potential of managers' career success. Furthermore, Abele and Spurk's longitudinal study [19] supported the SCCT theory in explaining career success. They found that occupational self-efficacy and career advancement goals had an impact on objective and subjective career attainments seven years later. Based on the theory, it is proposed that personal, behaviour and political environment will influence career success.
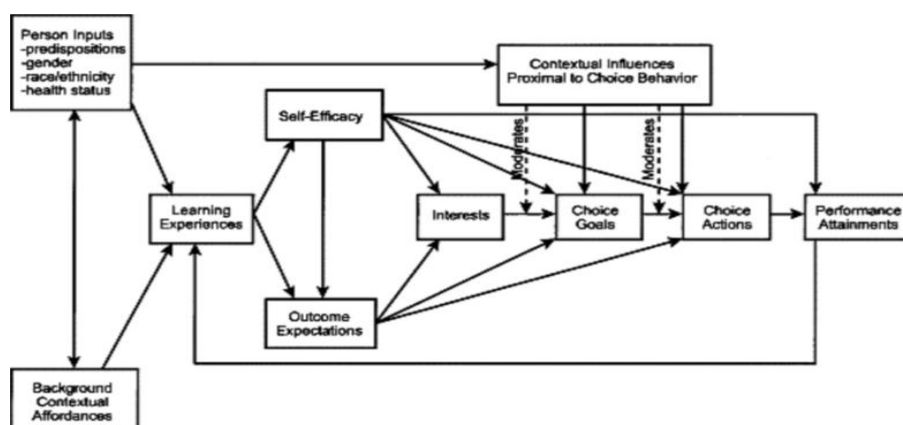

Figure 2.Flow chart of the social cognitive career theory (SCCT).Adoptedfrom "Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance". By R.W. Lent, S. D. Brown,& G. Hackett. (1994). Journal of Vocational Behavior, 45 ,p. 93

III. MODEL OF MANAGERIAL CAREER SUCCESS IN HIGHLY POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

3.1 Organizational politics and Career Success
Organizational politics is defined as the use power and other resources within an organization to acquire, develop and leads to preferred personal outcomes [7]. Politics is often regarded as a fact of life in an organization and inevitable. The phenomenon of organizational politics has becoming the focus of empirical research in the area of management since three decades ago.The phenomenon of organizational politics in modern organizations shown to have an important effect on individuals, groups, and stakeholders [58, 59].
Although many definitions have been proposed, politics can be defined as "the processes, the actions, and the behaviours through which potential power is utilized and realized" [20](p. 30). In the past, Pfeffersuggested a study to use the political perspective approach research to understand career success in organizations and suggested political skill as a necessary competency for effectiveness in an organization. In addition, Mintzberg[7, 43] suggested that performance, effectiveness, and career success are determined less by intelligence and hard work and more by social astuteness, positioning, and perceptiveness. Hence, the way to get ahead in a career is to build social and political competence. To date, the relationship between organizational politics and career outcome has received limited empirical study. Earlier studies have shown that political factors have been related to career outcome [21,22,23,24,25,26, 44, 45].
Politics plays an important role in organizational policies and likely influences several important work-related

attitudes and behaviours. The organizational politics activities have four elements [27]. First, it's not considered part of an individual's job andis not sanctioned by the organization. Second, it is self-serving activities that lead to desired outcomes for the individual, at the expense of others and the organization. Third, the real motivations behind the behaviours are often hidden from others. Fourth, political behaviours tend to occur in competitive environments with unclear rules.

Organizational politics is often considered dysfunctional to an organization because it has the potential to disrupt the organization's efficiency and effectiveness [27, 47]. In addition, it can have detrimental effects on employees [48, 49, 50]. A workplace that is widespread with politics is stressful to work in, is not conducive to promoting positive job attitudes, and is likely to have a high employee turnover [51]. The significant of organizational politics studies because of its potential effect on work outcomes[52, 53]. Thus, politics often interferes with the normal organizational processes such as promotions and rewards [28]. In highly political environment, political personality, skill and behaviour might influence the individual career success. Numerous studies have investigated organizational politics as a moderator in the relationship between leadership and work outcome [29]

Thus, it is proposed that:
P1: Political perceptions level will influence the relationship between personal characteristics and a business manager's career success

3.2 Political Personality Traits
The relationship between personality and career success has been extensivly studied in literature. A great deal of previous research has focus on Five-Factor Model of personality [8.15]. There is little published study focus on Machiavellianism and need for power personality trait influence on career success.

3.2.1 The Machiavellianism Personality Trait
A Machiavellianism personality is referred to a stable, individual negative character that manipulating others for personal performance and success [30]. This type of personality is correlated positively with perceptions of organizational politics and is often against other people's self-interest [31]. Machiavellianism is the term derived from Niccolo Machiavelli who wrote *The Prince* in 1532 where the methods for manipulation and gain of powers were detailed and explained. Machiavelli's perspectives are well known as "In the actions of men…from which there is no appeal, the end justifies the mean" [30] and the belief that unethical behaviour is acceptable, even necessary, if it helps attain goals or protects a job position. Machiavellian type individuals are described as manipulative and as having little care for the feelings or wellbeing of others. They try to control others by using many influence tactics. Mixed results were found in the study about the relationship between Machiavellianism personality and career outcomes. For instance, Christie and Geis[30] and Wakefield [32] found no relationship between Machiavellianism and socioeconomic success but Valle [33] found that the Machiavellianism personality was positively related to politics perceptions and political behaviours. Researchers have studied the presence of the Machiavellian traits in various occupations such as bankers [34] and lawyers [35]. Few published research showed that Machiavellianism is positively related to political skills [8] and indirectly positively related toobjective career success [35]

3.2.2 The Need for Power Personality Trait
Power is viewed as an individual's ability (real or perceived) to influence others or to have power over others. The Need for power (Npow) personality is "a stable individual's basic desire to influence and lead others to control an environment"(p. 720)[17]. This personality trait is based on the need theory of motivation developed by McClelland's Trichotomy of Needs (achievement, affiliation, and power). According to this theory, one way through which influence over others can be accomplished is by creating bases of power such as referent and expert [36]. Thus, it is expected that individuals with a high need for power would engage in self-focused ingratiation tactics in order to develop sufficient bases of power. Using ingratiation tactic will enable individuals to maximize control over their environments.

Research has demonstrated that employees high in the need of power tend to be high performers in supervisory positions [46]. Research also suggests that an individual's need for power is positively associated with organizational politics. Kumar and Beyerlein [37] found a significant positive correlation between the need for power and political activity. Kirchmeyer [2] observed that the need for power was positively associated with levels of political activity among female managers. To date, Ramsay, Pang, Ho, and Chan [38], report that there are positively associated need for power with leadership career choice: Thus, it proposed

P2: Political personality trait (Machiavellianism / Need for Power) contribute to a business manager's career success

3.3 Political Behaviour

Career behaviours are the actions that individuals take to achieve their career goals. The behaviouralapproach assumes that individuals have a certain control over their career choice and advancement and can, therefore, assess their career prospects and enact appropriate career plans and tactics that contribute to career success [1]. Research shows that individual behaviour such as career impatience, a willingness to relocate and perceived marketability [39] and political behaviours [22,33] have a significant influence on career success.In particular, Judge and Bretz[23] conducted the first study of the influence of political behaviour on career success. The study found that some political influence behaviours have a positive relationship with extrinsic and intrinsic career satisfaction[23]. The finding indicated that ingratiatory behaviour positively predicted extrinsic career success and intrinsic career success. Individuals who used ingratiatory behaviours toward their supervisors more often reported a higher level of job satisfaction. Previous study [26, 60] concluded that there are associated between political behaviour and career success.

Thus, it is proposed that

P3:*Political behaviourcontributes to a business manager's career success*

3.4 Political skill

A number of researchers have reported that political skill influences career success. The results from the Ferris et al. [35] study showed that political skill influences income, hierarchical position, and career satisfaction. Todd et al. [40] revealed that political skill dimensions (Networking, Interpersonal, Social astuteness) are significantly related to total promotions, career satisfaction, life satisfaction, and perceived external job mobility but are not significantly related to total compensation. The dimension that had the strongest associations was networking ability, which was related positively and significantly to all five outcome variables: (a) total compensation, (b) total promotions, (c) career satisfaction, (d) life satisfaction, and (e) perceived external mobility [40]. Previous research studies have showed that political skill is related to the career success of an individual [41, 56].

Thus based on these arguments, it is predicted that:

P4: *Political skill contributes to a business manager's career success*

The proposed model of managerial career success in highly political organization is developed for this study is shown in figure 3. It is based on political leadership theory and SCCT. It is suggested that Career success have been categorized as objective and subjective dimensions. The model consists of three key individual components:Political personality traits, political behaviour and political skill as the independent variable. Political personality traits, political behaviour, and political skill would significantly affect intrinsic and extrinsic career success.It is predicted that political environment would moderate the relationship between personality, skill, behaviour and career success. All three individual components are expected to influence managers career success in a highly political environment of the organization. This study presents four propositions derived from organizational politics and career literature. In this model career success is the dependent variable, political level is moderator and personality, behaviour and skill are independent variables.
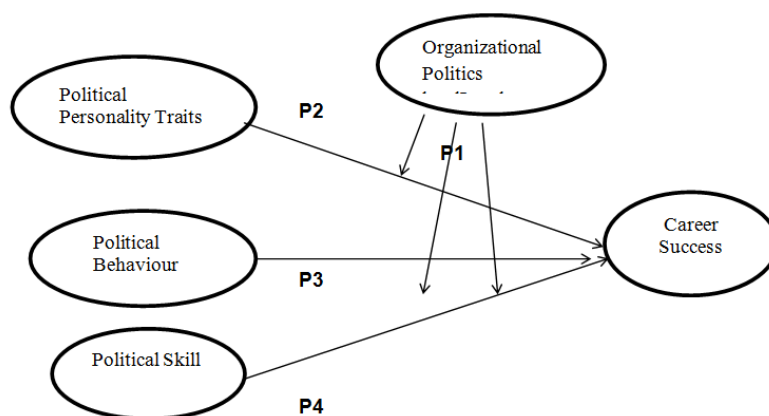

Figure 3. Model of managerial career success in highly political organization

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper has argued that to success in career, individual has to play a political game in organization. It is based on the premise that business organization is a political arena, whereas organizational politics is inevitable. This paper set out to develop a model for career success based on the political theory of leadership and Social Cognition Career Theory (SCCT). This model would explain manager's managerial career success from a

political perspective, especially for highly political environment. The developed model would lead to an empirical study on career success of business managers in Malaysia. It will help to solve the career success issue in workplace which is politically environment. This model suggests that individual factor could potentially predict career intrinsic and extrinsic success. Specifically, the model suggests that personality, behaviour, and skill from political perspective will influence career success of managers in the highly political organization. The model of career success proposed here could be considered as a support for the political leadership theory and SCCT theory. Future work is to be carried out for testing the proposed model in varying organization contexts. In summary, this proposed model would add a new theory in career development in highly political organization. This model would serves as a platform for future theoretical and empirical work on the topic of career success.

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