

The Mediating Effect of Glass Ceiling Beliefs in the Relationship between Women's Personality Traits and Their Subjective Career Success

女性對玻璃天花板之看法在女性人格特質與其主觀事業成就關係中的中介效應

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Abstract

Nowadays, the number of women working in organizations is growing, and they play a vital role in organizational productivity. However, male dominance in the workplace is still strong, and the glass ceiling effect, or the artificial barriers that prevent female employees from reaching top-level management positions, exists in both developed and developing countries. In this article, we use the theory of optimism and pessimism and propose that women's personality traits are related to their glass ceiling beliefs and subjective career success. Specifically, we propose the model in which glass ceiling beliefs in the forms including denial, resilience, acceptance, and resignation mediate the relationship between women's Big Five personality traits and their subjective career success. Our model has both theoretical and practical implications regarding how women may achieve their career success in organizations by overcoming the possible glass ceiling effect.

【Keywords】Big Five personality traits, glass ceiling beliefs, subjective career success

摘要

投入職場的女性人數日益增加，她們於組織生產力扮演重要的角色。然而，男性在職場中仍掌握強勢主導權，不論是已開發或開發中國家，依舊存在玻璃天花板效應及其他人為屏障，阻礙女性取得高階管理職位。本文以樂觀主義與悲觀主義推論，並提出以下假說：女性的人格特質和其對玻璃天花板的看法與其主觀事業成就具關聯性。我們所提出模型為：女性對玻璃天花板的看法可能屬下列四種：否認其存在、適應其存在並克服其所帶來的困難、接受其存在且不做抵抗、承認其存在並轉而追求職場以外的目標。這四種態度在模型中於女性人格特質與女性主觀事業成就具中介效果，並與這兩者互相影響、調和。本論文的模型對於女性係如何克服潛在的玻璃天花板效應以取得事業成就在理論及應用上皆具意涵。

【關鍵字】五大人格特質、玻璃天花板觀點、主觀事業成就

1. Introduction

The role of women cannot be ignored in the workplace considering their valuable participation in the productivity of organizations (Morrison and von Glinow, 1990). The number of female employees working in organizations has been accelerating periodically around the world (Arfken, Bellar, and Helms, 2004). In spite of that fact, male dominance in the workplace is still stronger in both developed and developing countries (Arulampalam, Booth, and Bryan, 2007). Over the last three decades, male employees working in the corporate sector have continued to view female employees as less qualified for various management positions. This belief is observed in many developed countries such as the USA, the UK, China, Germany, and Japan (Schein, 2007).

The artificial barrier that prevents women from reaching top-level management positions is called the glass ceiling (Cooper Jackson, 2001). The glass ceiling became a popular notion when it was introduced in the *Wall Street Journal* in 1986 (Hymowitz and Schellhardt, 1986). Glass ceiling can also apply to minorities, but most of the time it is referred to said obstacles faced by female employees (Arulampalam et al., 2007; Lee, 2002; Schein, 2007). Across the globe, the glass ceiling remains an organizational problem in both developed and developing countries (Reynolds, 1999; Schein, 2007). For instance, harmonized data from European countries show that the gender wage gap is higher in top-level management (Arulampalam et al., 2007). Stereotypical perceptions of female managers were also found in the USA, China, and Chile (Javalgi, Scherer, Sánchez, Pradenas Rojas, Parada Daza, Hwang, and Yan, 2011). A comparative analysis of different countries shows that the glass ceiling phenomenon exists worldwide and demands reasonable solutions (Livanos, Yalkin, and Nuñez, 2009).

Past research has focused on the subjective assessment of the glass ceiling effect (Wrigley, 2002). Smith, Crittenden, and Caputi (2012) have developed career pathway survey research and classified four types of women's glass ceiling beliefs (i.e., denial, resilience, acceptance, and resignation) in organizations. Based on the theory of optimism and pessimism, they categorize resilience and denial as optimistic beliefs and acceptance and resignation as pessimistic beliefs. Smith, Caputi, and Crittenden (2012) also find a significant relationship between glass ceiling beliefs and the subjective career success of women. In this paper, we modify and extend the work of Smith, Caputi, et al. (2012) by introducing the Big Five personality traits model to better understand the mechanism of glass ceiling beliefs and the subjective career success of women.

The theoretical underpinnings of our framework are based on the theory of optimism and pessimism. This theory states that people's actions are influenced by their positive and negative expectations about the consequences of those actions (Scheier and Carver, 1985, 1992). Researchers have examined both trait and state effects of optimism and pessimism (Luthans, 2002; Youssef and Luthans, 2007). Optimism is the tendency to believe that one will generally experience good outcomes in life, whereas pessimism is the tendency to believe that one will generally experience bad outcomes in life (Scheier and Carver, 1985, 1992). The theory of optimism and pessimism has been extensively studied in the psychological and organizational context (Adler and Matthews, 1994; George, 1991; Kluemper, Little, and DeGroot, 2009; Peterson, 2000; Scheier and Carver, 1992). For instance, optimism is related to health, stress reduction, and coping strategies, while pessimism is related to anger, anxiety, and depression (Keltner, Ellsworth, and Edwards, 1993; Luthans, 2002; Peterson, 2000; Scheier, Weintraub, and Carver, 1986). Organizational research has also shown that optimism is related to job satisfaction (Al-Mashaan, 2003), sales (Rich, 1999), task performance (Kluemper et al., 2009), leadership (Chemers, Watson, and May, 2000), and other organizational-related variables.

Based on the theory of optimism and pessimism (Scheier and Carver, 1992; Seligman, 2002) and according to the extensive literature review on the predictors of career success (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, and Barrick, 1999; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, and Feldman, 2005) and glass ceiling beliefs (Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012), we combine the Big Five personality traits, glass ceiling beliefs, and career success to better understand the mechanisms and barriers involved in women's career growth. We argue that women's glass ceiling beliefs mediate between personality traits and their subjective career success. Personality traits remain stable over time, and beliefs are likely to change (Judge et al., 1999; Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012). Therefore, we assume that women's personality traits can cause optimistic and pessimistic beliefs in organizations. We believe our study will help deepen the understanding of the glass ceiling phenomenon and barriers involved in women's career advancement.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. First, we review the literature on the constructs of Big Five personality traits, glass ceiling beliefs, and subjective career success. Second, we explain the relationship between women's personality traits, glass ceiling beliefs, and subjective career success. Third, we describe how glass ceiling beliefs mediate the relationship between women's personality traits and their subjective career success. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the study.

2. Big Five Personality Traits

The exploration of the structure of personality is quite old, and many psychologists worldwide have contributed to establishing a standard for personality assessment (Allport and Odbert, 1936). Psychologists have assessed personality using different measures by examining multiple traits of human personality through which they can be judged. Goldberg (1990) described personality components in the form of extroversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, which he collaboratively called the Big Five model. People use the Big Five model to assess their personality traits, and organizations also use it for various purposes (Judge et al., 1999). A consensus is emerging among researchers that many salient aspects of personality can be described using the Big Five personality model (Boudreau, Boswell, and Judge, 2001; Goldberg, 1990; McCrae and John, 1992; Tupes and Christal, 1992). The Big Five personality model also provides a standard framework within which many specific constructs of personality can be understood (John and Srivastava, 1999; Wiggins and Trapnell, 1997). Past researchers have highlighted the need to examine personality traits and career success and encouraged use of the Big Five personality factors in this endeavor (Boudreau et al., 2001; McCrae and John, 1992; Tokar, Fischer, and Subich, 1998).

Extroverts tend to be more social, talkative, and assertive compared to introverts, who are quiet, reserved, and timid (Tupes and Christal, 1961). Past researchers have found a significant relationship between positive emotions and extroversion (Watson and Clark, 1992). Extroversion plays a special role in social relationships in which there is give and take among the parties (Bernerth, Armenakis, Feild, Giles, and Jack Walker, 2007). Leadership is also related to extroversion, and transformational leadership in particular is positively related to extroverted people (Zopiatis and Constanti, 2012).

Neuroticism means the person tends to be nervous, insecure, depressed, and anxious (Tupes and Christal, 1961). Neuroticism is a personality trait that is associated with low self-esteem, and such a trait has a negative impact on a person's personality (Bernerth et al., 2007). People with low self-esteem avoid taking on challenges, and because of their low level of confidence, they are less attractive to others (Turban and Dougherty, 1994). Neurotic people, as a result of their negative emotional state, perceive the world in a negative way (Watson and Clark, 1984). People with a low score on neuroticism are emotionally stable, calm, secure, and confident (Turban and Dougherty, 1994). People with high emotional stability have higher self-esteem level and are usually called Mount Everest climbers (Judge and LePine, 2007).

People with the trait of openness to experience are creative, artistic, and curious (Tupes and Christal, 1961). Openness to experience is related to intellectual capability, and people in this category are artistic, intelligent, open-minded, and creative (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Open-minded individuals are more capable of adapting and understanding new perspectives of life and the external environment (Judge and Bono, 2000). Openness to experience is the only Big Five personality trait that is linked to intelligence (Judge and Bono, 2000). People with less openness to experience are conventional and traditionally comfort-oriented, which results in low creativity and intelligence (Tupes and Christal, 1961).

People high in agreeableness are warm, cooperative, and trustworthy (Tupes and Christal, 1961). Agreeableness includes kindness, sensitivity, modesty, care, and respect (Bernierth et al., 2007). People who possess the personality trait of agreeableness are respectful, tactful, kind, and good-natured. Research has suggested that agreeableness is positively related to interactions with the team and performance (Kichuk and Wiesner, 1997). On the other hand, people with low agreeableness are not cooperative. Rather, they prefer to compete (Costa Jr and McCrae, 1992). People with low agreeableness are cold, antagonistic, and disagreeable (Tupes and Christal, 1961). The agreeableness trait may lead to sacrificing career goals due to conflict avoidance and care for other people (Judge et al., 1999).

Conscientiousness is a measure of reliability. Conscientious people are organized, responsible, persistent, and dependable (Tupes and Christal, 1961). People possessing the personality trait of conscientiousness are categorized as hardworking, consistent, actively responsible, good planners, and well organized (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Researchers have also mentioned that people with the conscientiousness trait tend to avoid path divergence and are willing to indulge themselves in a task (Barry and Stewart, 1997). Conscientiousness is observed as one of the most reliable factors related to job performance (Barrick, Mount, and Judge, 2001).

3. Glass Ceiling Effect

The concept of the glass ceiling effect is well known worldwide. This effect refers to how career paths of female employees are hindered in the workplace through artificial barriers when being compared to those of male employees (Davidson and Cooper, 1992). The glass ceiling effect is a phenomenon in which women are discriminated against in terms of reaching higher management positions as a consequence of artificial barriers

within the organization (Powell, 2012). Past research has elaborated four different criteria that must be met to conclude that a glass ceiling exists in an organization (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, and Vanneman, 2001). First, the definition of glass ceiling must recognize that it reflects a job inequality that is unexplained by the person's past qualifications and achievements (Cotter et al., 2001). Second, the glass ceiling is gender or racial inequality. Third, it is gender or racial inequality in advancement to higher levels, such that the gender gap grows as one moves to the top hierarchical order (Cotter et al., 2001). Fourth, the glass ceiling is an inequality that will increase throughout a person's career (Cotter et al., 2001). The criteria mentioned above are ideal in terms of confirmation of the glass ceiling effect in any organization. Both objective and subjective assessments of the glass ceiling are needed in an organization based on the criteria mentioned above. Although there is vast research on the glass ceiling effect around the world, a deeper understanding of this phenomenon is still important to eliminate it from organizations completely.

Past researchers have observed that the flow of women in organizations is steady and increasing (Goldman, 1973). However, structural obstacles, including organizational practices and policies, and a difference in behavior in organizational culture have been observed in organizations (Sonnert and Holton, 1996). Organizations have to accept the need for women, and both public and private sectors cannot deny their existence (Goldman, 1973). Corporate culture also plays an important role in promoting social norms and traditions regarding male dominance affecting the female workforce (Sonnert and Holton, 1996). The ambition and desire of women to reach top positions are hindered by the insufficient exposure for their career building in terms of guidance, training, and experience (Sonnert and Holton, 1996). CEOs of big companies have tried to facilitate the career growth of women in their organizations, which is commendable, but a long-term solution to end glass ceilings is not present in this approach (Ragins, Townsend, and Mattis, 1998). The introduction of the Glass Ceiling Commission in 1991 was a positive step that highlighted the fact that glass ceilings are the main hurdle for women to reach top management positions and suggested active solutions to break the glass ceiling (Cooper Jackson, 2001). The Glass Ceiling Commission was a good step for the survival of talented women in organizations and provided valuable solutions to cope with the glass ceiling effect (Cooper Jackson, 2001).

4. Glass Ceiling Beliefs

Women's beliefs about the glass ceiling have been reported in many qualitative studies (Browne, 2006; Wrigley, 2002). These qualitative studies have helped scholars with the assimilation of the four-factor model of glass ceiling beliefs (Browne, 2006; Wrigley, 2002). Based on previous studies on the glass ceiling, four different forms of women's beliefs are identified: denial, resignation, acceptance, and resilience (Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012). These beliefs are determined through the career pathway survey, and later research find that these beliefs are significantly related to the career success of women (Smith, Caputi, et al., 2012). This study is useful in exploring and linking glass ceiling beliefs to the career success literature. The four identified glass ceiling beliefs are defined as follows:

4.1 Denial

Denial is an optimistic belief of women toward the glass ceiling, where they believe that men and women face almost equal problems when they move toward top management positions (Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012). It is a positive attitude of women toward their career advancement, believing that there is no specific discrimination against women in top management positions (i.e., both males and females face the same hurdles in their upward promotion (Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012)).

4.2 Resilience

Resilience is another optimistic belief of women, where they believe that they are able to cope with the glass ceiling effect (Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012). Resilience is a positive attitude of women toward career advancement because they believe that even in the presence of glass ceilings, they can fight for their right to promotion and career advancement (Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012).

4.3 Resignation

Resignation is a negative belief of women toward the glass ceiling, where they perceive that they face more obstacles than men when moving toward top management positions, and there are many overwhelming reasons due to which it is difficult for them to break the glass ceiling (Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012). It is a pessimistic attitude of women toward the glass ceiling effect; they find it difficult to reach higher positions

compared to men. This belief may lead to intention to quitting, high turnover rate, or low performance (Smith, Caputi, et al., 2012).

4.4 Acceptance

Acceptance is a pro-family attitude of women in organizations, where they prefer other goals, such as the preference of family compared to promotion or leadership (Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012). Acceptance is another pessimistic belief of women toward career advancement, where women accept the glass ceiling due to their commitments toward family (Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012). Women with the glass ceiling belief of acceptance are not ambitious to move toward top management positions and are not willing to take on responsibilities (Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012).

5. Subjective Career Success

The overall accumulated psychological and work-related outcomes as a result of the work experience of employees is called career success (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, and Bretz Jr, 1995; Seibert and Kraimer, 2001). Career success can be measured extrinsically in terms of salary and promotions and intrinsically such as career satisfaction (Judge et al., 1995). Career satisfaction is considered a major predictor of subjective career success (Seibert and Kraimer, 2001). However, many research scholars have emphasized happiness, physical health, psychological health, and work engagement as important indicators of subjective career success (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, and Taris, 2008; Fisher, 2010; Judge et al., 1995; Judge and Hurst, 2008; Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener, 2005; Smith, Caputi, et al., 2012; Wright, Cropanzano, and Bonett, 2007). Additionally, all of the mentioned indicators are related to work performance in the organization (Bakker et al., 2008; Fisher, 2010; Judge and Hurst, 2008; Wright and Cropanzano, 2000).

Career satisfaction is derived from the individual appraisal of advancement and career development across jobs (Seibert and Kraimer, 2001). Career satisfaction includes factors that are inherent in the job, and they are dependent on the subjective evaluation of the employees of the organization (Bray and Howard, 1980; Judge and Bretz Jr, 1994). Career satisfaction is an important predictor of subjective career success and is significantly related to a job (Ng et al., 2005; Orser and Leck, 2010).

Happiness is a positive affective state that is shown through joy on people's expressions and within (Blades, 2009). Past researchers have argued that positive emotions are related to long life, whereas people experiencing negative emotions have

short lives (Danner, Snowdon, and Friesen, 2001). According to past research, happiness is important both for the society as a whole and for each individual (Veenhoven, 1994). It is easy to find a person who is happy or unhappy (Myers and Diener, 1995). However, for some people, happiness occurs when they are wealthy, while for other people, happiness develops from true love (Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999). The Subjective Happiness Scale is used by researchers to measure happiness in general and in the workplace (Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999).

Health is not only a biological phenomenon, but it also includes physical, psychological, and social well-being (Ziglio, Hagard, and Griffiths, 2000). Health consists of both physical health and mental health in the form of emotional or mental well-being (Ziglio et al., 2000). Health can be viewed both objectively and subjectively in the form of triglycerides and perceptions of health, respectively (Abdel-Maksoud, Sazonov, Gutkin, and Hokanson, 2008). Past researchers have identified the importance of physical and psychological health in terms of job-related outcomes (Fredrickson and Joiner, 2002).

The psychological state including vigor, dedication, and absorption is called work engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). Creativity and productivity are related to the engagement of workers (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). Past research has shown that more engagement in work improves the performance of the team, individual, and organization (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, and Barua, 2012). For the economic benefit of the organization, it is very important to keep work engagement effective, both at the management level and at the staff level (Saks, 2006). In short, engaged workers possess self-esteem, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience, which helps them to achieve career success (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman, 2007).

6. Women's Personality Traits and Career Success

Our framework adds the Big Five personality trait model to the existing body of knowledge on the relationship between glass ceiling beliefs and subjective career success (Smith, Caputi, et al., 2012). According to past research, personality plays a central role in people's career success (Howard and Bray, 1990; Judge et al., 1999; Seibert, Crant, and Kraimer, 1999). Researchers emphasize exploring the personality traits more, especially the Big Five personality traits and their role in career success (Tokar et al., 1998). The Big Five personality traits are directly or indirectly related to the career success of employees (Boudreau et al., 2001; Tokar et al., 1998; Seibert and Kraimer, 2001). According to meta-analysis research on predictors of career success, extroversion, conscientiousness, and

emotional stability are directly related to career success (Ng et al., 2005). There are mixed results on the roles of agreeableness and openness to experience in career success (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Seibert and Kraimer, 2001; Salgado and Rumbold, 1997). The accumulated research on personality traits and career success shows that the Big Five personality traits are important antecedents to the career success of both men and women in organizations (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Judge et al., 1999; Seibert et al., 1999; Seibert and Kraimer, 2001; Tokar et al., 1998). The personality of women and people's perceptions of their personality also play an important role in the advancement of their careers (Seibert and Kraimer, 2001). If women display masculine and adaptive traits, there is a greater chance that they will be promoted to top management positions (Metz, 2004). Most scholars have suggested that understanding how personality affects career success can help organizations to formulate a strategy for the careers of both men and women in organizations (Seibert and Kraimer, 2001).

7. Women's Glass Ceiling Beliefs and Career Success

As stated earlier, the career pathway survey identified four sets of glass ceiling beliefs: denial, resilience, acceptance, and resignation (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012). Women have been identified as having either optimistic or pessimistic glass ceiling beliefs (Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012). Smith, Caputi, et al. (2012) find that these beliefs of women concerning career advancement are significantly related to their career success. For instance, according to their study, optimistic beliefs of women, including denial and resilience, are positively related to career satisfaction, and pessimistic beliefs in the form of acceptance and resignation are negatively related to career satisfaction (Smith, Caputi, et al., 2012). Similarly, they find that women who have optimistic beliefs are more likely to show work engagement, feel happy, and be physically and psychologically healthy compared to women who have pessimistic beliefs about their career advancement (Smith, Caputi, et al., 2012). Their study provides an important hint of lifting the subjective career success of women in organizations. Moreover, they recommend the association of personality traits and glass ceiling beliefs as a possible topic for future research in order to better understand the mechanism. Our study fills this gap by adding the personality trait model to the existing body of knowledge.

8. Women's Personality Traits, Glass Ceiling Beliefs and Subjective Career Success

The theory of optimism and pessimism has been extensively studied in the personality literature (Boland and Cappeliez, 1997; Marshall, Wortman, Kusulas, Hervig, and Vickers Jr, 1992; Williams, 1992). The construct of optimism has often been linked to high extroversion/positive emotionality and low neuroticism (Boland and Cappeliez, 1997; Marshall et al., 1992). However, past research has also found a correlation between other Big Five personality traits and optimism (Lounsbury, Saudargas, and Gibson, 2004; Milligan, 2003). For instance, Milligan (2003) finds positive correlations between optimism and extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Similarly, other scholars find positive correlations between optimism and extroversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability (Lounsbury et al., 2004; Sharpe, Martin, and Roth, 2011). There is a consensus among scholars that personality traits can lead to optimism and pessimism (Boland and Cappeliez, 1997; Marshall et al., 1992; Milligan, 2003).

As stated earlier, Smith, Crittenden, et al. (2012) identify women's glass ceiling beliefs as either optimistic or pessimistic. Based on the abovementioned literature, we argue that women's personality traits can lead to optimistic and pessimistic glass ceiling beliefs. Additionally, people usually perform and react according to their personality and beliefs in different situations (Bandura, 1977). The personality and beliefs of people determine their attitude toward something (Beck, 1976). Optimistic and pessimistic beliefs play a critical role in the formation of both optimistic and pessimistic behavior in organizations (Salkovskis, Clark, and Hackmann, 1991). For instance, Smith, Caputi, et al. (2012) find that the optimistic and pessimistic beliefs of women are related to their career success. Therefore, based on the theory of optimism and pessimism, and according to the literature review on the relationship between personality traits, glass ceiling beliefs, and career success, we propose that women's glass ceiling beliefs are likely to mediate the relationship between personality traits and the subjective career success of women.

Extroversion is the most prominent factor in the psychology of the individual (Judge et al., 1999). Extroversion is a leadership quality, and people who possess this personality trait also experience positive feelings (Watson and Clark, 1997). Extroverts are more likely to be dominant and ambitious and are more likely to choose the path of ambition and dominance compared to introverted people (Watson and Clark, 1997). Moreover,

extroverts are more impulsive and active than introverts, and they find ways to become prominent and progress (Watson and Clark, 1997). Therefore, we argue that extroversion personality traits of women will help them deal with resilience and denial in order to move forward for their career advancement. On the other hand, introverts are less ambitious compared to extroverts, and women with introversion personality traits will become pessimistic toward their career advancement in the form of acceptance and resignation. Additionally, these negative beliefs have a negative impact on the career success of women (Judge et al., 1999; Smith, Caputi, et al., 2012).

Therefore, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 1: Women's glass ceiling beliefs mediate the relationship between extroversion and their subjective career success such that a high level of extroversion increases resilience and denial and decreases acceptance and resignation, which in turn increases subjective career success.

Agreeable personality types are cheerful, trusting, and cooperative (Watson and Clark, 1997). However, unlike the other Big Five personality traits, agreeableness can cause people to sacrifice their career plans in order to please others, which may have a negative impact on their career success (Judge et al., 1999). Women possessing pessimistic beliefs such as acceptance and resignation may also give up because of their preference for other goals or avoidance of disagreements (Smith, Crittenden, et al., 2012). People with a low agreeable personality type will disagree with people and are likely to break the traditional rules (Judge et al., 1999). We argue that denial and resilience provide the ability to fight for career success, and low agreeableness can lead to more denial and resilience in the workplace because of people's disagreeable nature (Judge et al., 1999; Smith, Caputi, et al., 2012).

Therefore, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 2: Women's glass ceiling beliefs mediate the relationship between agreeableness and their subjective career success such that a high level of agreeableness decreases resilience and denial and increases acceptance and resignation, which in turn decreases subjective career success.

The conscientiousness personality type emerged as the most consistent indicator of job performance in the workplace (Barrick and Mount, 1991). People with this personality type are persistent and hardworking at their jobs, achievement-oriented in their career, and careful regarding their responsibilities (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Conscientious people are self-controlled and have a need for achievement (Costa Jr and McCrae, 1997). Past research has also shown that these personality characteristics are significantly related to career success (Judge et al., 1999). According to the study of Smith, Caputi, et al. (2012), denial and resilience are related to achievement orientation, and women who want to be promoted will show more denial and resilience.

Therefore, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 3: Women's glass ceiling beliefs mediate the relationship between conscientiousness and their subjective career success such that a high level of conscientiousness increases resilience and denial and decreases acceptance and resignation, which in turn increases subjective career success.

Emotional stability is also one of the strongest indicators of career success among the Big Five personality traits (Judge et al., 1999). Low emotional stability is called neuroticism, which leads to negative emotions and moods (Scheier, Carver, and Bridges, 1994; Costa Jr and McCrae, 2013). Neuroticism is related to stress and anxiety-related tendencies (Costa Jr and McCrae, 2013). The neuroticism personality trait is pessimistic and has a negative impact on the career success of employees (Judge et al., 1999). According to Costa Jr and McCrae (2013), neuroticism generates negative beliefs about oneself and one's environment, whereas emotional stability leads to positive beliefs. Emotional stability is significantly related to job-related characteristics and has a positive impact on the career success of employees (Judge et al., 1999). We argue that emotional stability generates optimism, and women with emotional stability will show denial and resilience against the glass ceiling effect.

Therefore, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 4: Women's glass ceiling beliefs mediate the relationship between emotional stability and their subjective career success such that a high level of emotional stability increases resilience and denial and decreases acceptance and resignation, which in turn increases subjective career success.

Openness to experience is related to creativity and an artistic approach (Tupes and Christal, 1961). Openness to experience leads to intellectual stimulation and creativity, which are instrumental to the career success of employees (Costa Jr and McCrae, 2013; Judge et al., 1999). On the other hand, people with less openness to experience are traditional and conventional and not curious about the world (Tupes and Christal, 1961). Past researchers also find a significant relationship between openness to experience and career success (Judge et al., 1999). We argue that in the case of female employees, desire for success and achievement orientation lead to optimism in the form of denial and resilience, and vice versa.

Therefore, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 5: Women's glass ceiling beliefs mediate the relationship between openness to experience and their subjective career success such that a high level of openness to experience increases resilience and denial and decreases acceptance and resignation, which in turn increases subjective career success.

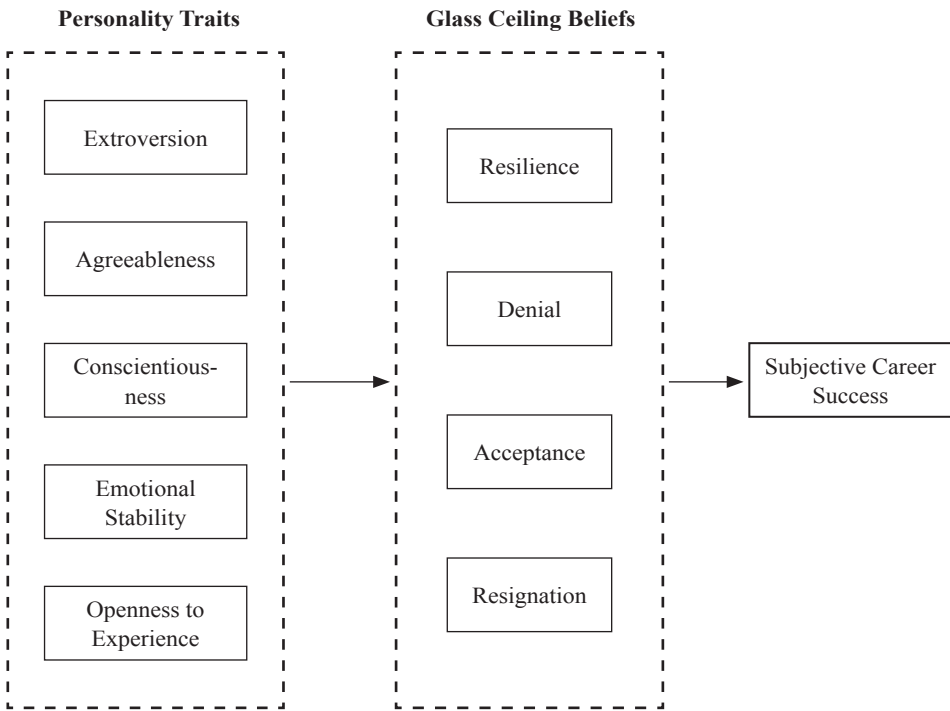


Figure 1 Proposed Mediation Model

9. Discussion

9.1 Theoretical Implications

Our research contributes to the glass ceiling literature both theoretically and practically. The current research helps to understand the deep mechanism of women's personality traits, glass ceiling beliefs, and subjective career success. Our research also contributes to the career success literature by including boundary conditions for a better explanation of the previously observed direct patterns of personality and career success (Judge et al., 1999; Smith, Caputi, et al., 2012). Our research also provides insights for introducing individual, organizational, and contextual variables as mediators in the future to better understand the theory of women's career advancement and career success. Furthermore, using the current research model, women's personality traits and glass ceiling beliefs can be analyzed in different job contexts. For instance, researchers can identify the importance of the Big Five traits and glass ceiling beliefs across different departments, such as marketing, finance, and human resource management (Cook and Glass, 2011; Forster, 1999). The focus of the current study is on women's personality and glass ceiling beliefs and their subjective career success. However, in the future, personality traits and glass ceiling beliefs can be studied in the context of male employees. For instance, researchers can analyze the personality and attitudes of male employees toward glass ceiling beliefs (Stroh, Brett, and Reilly, 1996).

9.2 Practical Implications

Our research has implications for practice in organizations. Organizations may make their best effort to eliminate the glass ceiling in an objective sense. However, women may still develop glass ceiling "beliefs", being afraid of the possibility of the glass ceiling effect. Therefore, organizations should encourage female employees to develop optimistic glass ceiling beliefs by providing training and support (Bass and Avolio, 1994). On the other hand, our research illustrates that glass ceiling beliefs are bounded by personality traits, meaning that companies' efforts to train and support female employees have limitations. Therefore, focusing on the personality traits in personnel selection might be a good idea in order to hire female employees who will develop optimistic glass ceiling beliefs (Rosse, Stecher, Miller, and Levin, 1998). In sum, selecting female employees based on their personality traits and encouraging and supporting female employees to develop optimistic glass ceiling beliefs will eventually help female employees to achieve their subjective career success.

9.3 Limitations and Future Research

Our research is not without limitations. We conceptualize a propositional model of the mediation effect of glass ceiling beliefs in the relationship between women's personality traits and their subjective career success. In the future, empirical research based on this model can strengthen the existing contribution to the theory. Additionally, in our research model, we primarily focus on the subjective assessment of women's career success. Future research should focus on the empirical and objective assessment of career success by obtaining feedback from peers and bosses (Kirchmeyer, 2006). Our research model has focused on the mediation effect, which shows that personality traits can cause optimistic and pessimistic beliefs among female employees. Future research may focus on the moderation effect of glass ceiling beliefs in the relationship between the personality traits of women and their career success. Past researchers have identified bosses' perceptions of female employees as a reason for the glass ceiling in organizations. For instance, bosses might perceive women as unfit for the organization as a result of their family-work conflicts (Hoobler, Wayne, and Lemmon, 2009). Future research can investigate women's glass ceiling beliefs about their bosses' perceptions and their impact on subjective career success (Hoobler et al., 2009). Additionally, married and single women observe different work-family conflicts in the organizations (Hoobler et al., 2009). In the future, it might be interesting to learn about the difference between the glass ceiling beliefs of married and single women. Moreover, past researchers have argued that women are moving toward entrepreneurship as a result of the glass ceiling effect (Sullivan and Meek, 2012). Future research can investigate how the optimistic and pessimistic glass ceiling beliefs of women are related to their entrepreneurial intentions. Judge et al. (1999) has focused on the Big Five personality traits and the career success of employees. Future researchers might find other personality traits and their relationship with women's glass ceiling beliefs. For instance, past researchers have identified the locus of control as an important predictor of career success (Ng et al., 2005). People with an internal locus of control reflect the belief that they can master their fate (Ng et al., 2005). Future research can investigate how women's locus of control is related to their optimistic and pessimistic glass ceiling beliefs in an organization.

In sum, our study explains one of the potential mechanisms involved in the contemporary glass ceiling effect and the career advancement of female employees. The

majority of organizations are dominated at the top by male managers (Duehr and Bono, 2006). Therefore, research scholars are trying to identify ways of shattering the glass ceiling in organizations (Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000). Our study also provides insights on understanding and reducing the impact of the glass ceiling effect in organizations.

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