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Psychological Capital as a Pathway to Academic Career Success and Well-Being: The Roles of Work–Family Conflict, Self-Directed Career Management, and Demographic Factors

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Abstract

This research investigates the factors shaping Academic Career Success (ACS) and Subjective Well-Being (SWB) among university faculty, emphasizing the mediating role of Psychological Capital (PsyCap). The study examines Work–Family Conflict (WFC) and Self-Directed Career Management (SDCM) as primary predictors, and considers gender, generational cohort, and educational attainment as potential moderators. Data were collected from 146 academics working in public and private Indonesian universities, each with a minimum of one year of professional experience. The analysis indicates that PsyCap serves as a significant mediator linking WFC and SDCM to ACS, while also having a direct positive effect on career success. Demographic factors did not moderate the relationships with SWB or ACS, but they exerted notable direct effects on ACS: higher education and older generational cohorts were associated with greater career achievements. While ACS levels did not differ by gender, female academics reported significantly higher SWB than males. These findings highlight PsyCap as a vital asset for fostering career advancement and well-being, and underscore the influence of demographic characteristics on academic trajectories. Enhancing PsyCap may represent a practical approach to simultaneously support professional growth and personal well-being in higher education.

Keywords: Academic career success, Self-directed career management, Work–family conflict, Subjective well-being, Psychological capital

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Introduction

This study aims to investigate how individual factors, namely Self-Directed Career Management (SDCM) and Work–Family Conflict (WFC), shape Academic Career Success (ACS) and Subjective Well-Being (SWB). Central to this investigation is Psychological Capital (PsyCap), which is examined as a mediating mechanism, while gender, generational cohort (gen-type), and educational attainment are considered as potential moderators. The research adopts an exploratory approach and tests the conceptual model illustrated in **Figure 1**, focusing on the experiences of academic staff in the Faculty of Economics and Business.

Indonesia provides a particularly relevant context for this research. First, there is limited understanding of how personal career management and work-life dynamics influence SWB and ACS in non-Western higher education systems [1], making this study a valuable contribution. Second, PsyCap has often been examined as a predictor of ACS [2, 3], yet its role as a mediator linking SDCM to SWB, WFC to ACS, and SWB to ACS remains underexplored. Third, this study investigates whether

demographic characteristics—gender, educational level, and generational cohort—affect the relationships between career management, work-family conflict, well-being, and career outcomes.

By addressing these gaps, the research aims to advance theoretical understanding of SWB and ACS in academia, while offering insights specific to the Faculty of Economics and Business in Indonesia. The findings are expected to shed light on the mechanisms through which personal and demographic factors influence career trajectories and well-being among academic staff.

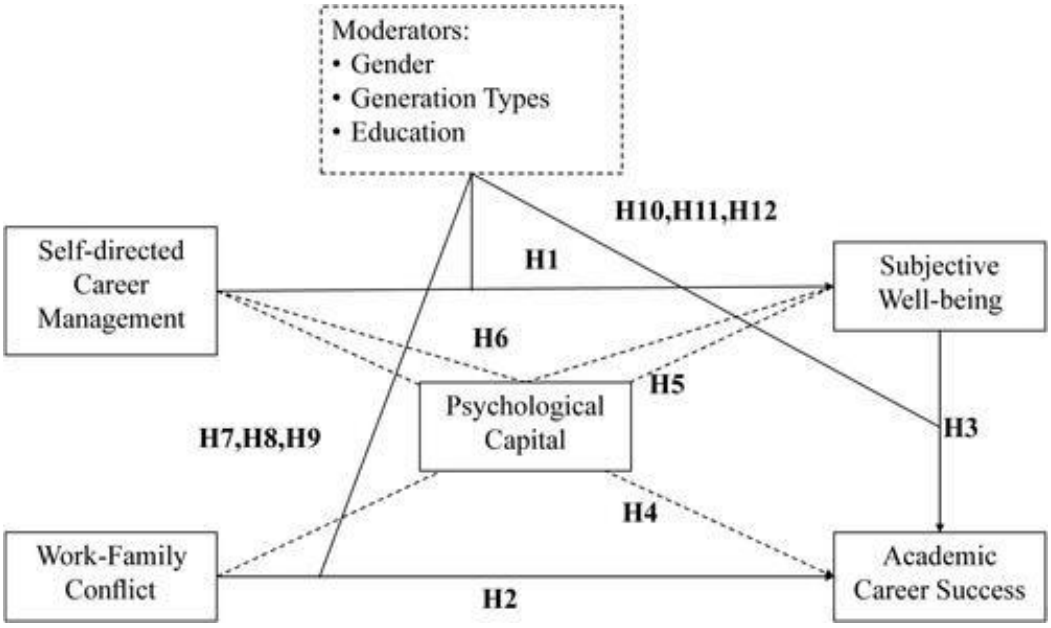

Figure 1. Research framework

Context of academic careers in indonesia

In Indonesia, as elsewhere, academic staff are responsible for fulfilling the "Trilogy of Higher Education," which includes teaching, research, and community service. Educational qualifications play a central role in higher education, with regulations requiring lecturers to hold at least a master's degree to teach at the undergraduate level. The 2020–2024 Strategic Plan of the Indonesian Directorate General of Higher Education highlights the proportion of lecturers with doctoral degrees as a key indicator of higher education quality. While Indonesia surpasses some Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, it still lags behind developed nations; for instance, in Japan nearly all lecturers hold doctoral degrees. As of December 2024, PD-Dikti data report that only 14.47% of active lecturers in Indonesia hold a PhD, 77.17% have a master's degree, and the remainder possess bachelor's or diploma qualifications. Of the total 296,040 lecturers, 56.4% are men and 43.6% are women, underscoring ongoing gaps in academic capacity compared to developed countries.

Academic career progression and challenges

Choosing an academic career involves distinct trajectories compared to other professions. In Indonesian public universities, academic progression follows a structured path—from civil servant candidate or non-functional lecturer to expert assistant, lecturer, associate professor, and ultimately professor. However, lecturers face numerous challenges at individual, departmental, institutional, and societal levels [4]. Institutional support, including financial resources, policies, and administrative systems, is critical to facilitating career advancement. Without careful attention and interventions, academics risk stagnation, a phenomenon often referred to as a career plateau [5].

Similar to other countries, Indonesian higher education institutions face organizational pressures that influence academic career success. Funding mechanisms increasingly reward performance, competitiveness, and outputs rather than simple line-item budgets, prompting universities to adopt entrepreneurial approaches, collaborate with industry, and pursue international partnerships [6, 7]. Such pressures heighten the demand for innovation and publication in high-impact journals, which may undervalue non-traditional outputs like creative projects or live performances [8, 9].

At the individual level, lecturers encounter pressures to continue their studies, secure research funding, and produce publications, often without standardized performance evaluation processes [10-13]. Gender disparities exist, with female academics facing more obstacles and discrimination, limiting opportunities for career advancement [14-16]. Younger academics also experience heightened publication pressure, which can adversely affect career achievement [16, 17].

Balancing work and family demands remains a core challenge for academics. Academic careers require significant investment of time, energy, and mental resources, often compelling individuals to navigate financial constraints, family responsibilities, and professional development simultaneously [4, 13]. Decisions regarding continuing studies locally or abroad, managing

children's needs, and supporting a spouse with a separate career add to these pressures. In such contexts, subjective well-being becomes a key factor in maintaining personal and professional equilibrium.

Career development and academic career success

Career development is an ongoing process in which individuals progress through sequential stages, each presenting unique challenges and opportunities [18]. While existing career literature emphasizes the benefits and implications of career growth for both organizations and individuals [19], research often overlooks the broader context in which individuals operate [20]. This study therefore investigates the individual-level predictors of SWB and ACS, focusing on Self-Directed Career Management (SDCM) and Work–Family Conflict (WFC) as antecedents, while examining the mediating role of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) and the moderating influence of gender, generational cohort, and educational level.

Theoretical foundations: Career success and academic career success

Career success refers to the positive outcomes and achievements an individual accumulates through work experiences [21-23]. Career management supports individuals in developing their skills, interests, and abilities to achieve desired goals [24]. Spurk *et al.* [25] distinguish between objective career success (OCS) and subjective career success (SCS). OCS encompasses observable and measurable indicators such as salary, promotion, and occupational prestige [21, 25, 26], while SCS reflects perceived career satisfaction and personal achievement [27-29].

In this study, ACS is operationalized using OCS measures, ranging from entry-level positions to full professorships within Indonesian academia. Career success integrates both professional achievements and positive psychological outcomes accumulated over time [30], influenced not only by institutional experience but also broader social and personal contexts. Accordingly, ACS is linked to career orientation, work-family conflict, well-being, and PsyCap. In this research, achieving ACS entails progressing through the academic functional ranks, culminating in professorship.

Protean career orientation and self-directed career management

Managing one's career often requires individuals to move beyond secure employment structures and explore new opportunities, sometimes crossing organizational boundaries [31]. This aligns with a more individualized approach to career planning, fostering ambitions such as protean careers (PC) [32]. and boundaryless careers (BC) [33, 34]. This study focuses on the self-directed career management dimension of protean career orientation.

According to Hall [32], a protean career reflects an individual's tendency to autonomously manage their career according to personal values and goals rather than organizational dictates [35, 36]. Individuals with this orientation take responsibility for career advancement themselves [37]. Briscoe *et al.* [38] further characterize protean career orientation as being 'value-driven'—guided by personal values—and 'self-directed,' with individuals actively shaping their work behavior. In contrast, those lacking a protean mindset tend to rely on external norms and guidance rather than pursuing proactive, autonomous career development. This study emphasizes the self-directed aspect of protean career orientation.

Work-family conflict

Work-family conflict arises when demands from work and family roles are incompatible, creating role pressure and tension [39-41]. Such conflicts are recognized as stressors that can negatively affect both professional and family life, sometimes resulting in family dysfunction, stress, or psychological problems [42].

Greenhaus and Beutell [40] define work-family conflict as a type of role conflict where responsibilities in the work and family domains interfere with one another. They distinguish between two directions: work interferes with family (WIF) and family interferes with work (FIW). WIF occurs when professional obligations hinder family responsibilities, while FIW occurs when family duties impede work tasks [43-45]. Prioritizing one domain can make fulfilling responsibilities in the other more difficult, highlighting the challenges of balancing work and family roles.

Subjective well-being

Subjective well-being (SWB) encompasses multiple dimensions, including psychological, emotional, social, and life satisfaction [46]. High SWB is characterized by life satisfaction, frequent positive emotions, and infrequent negative emotions. Well-being can be measured objectively, such as access to resources, or subjectively, reflecting personal perceptions of happiness and flourishing [47].

Research differentiates hedonic (pleasure-focused) and eudaimonic (meaning-focused) approaches to well-being, and many contemporary models integrate both perspectives [48]. Ryff and Keyes [49] identify six dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Seligman's PERMA model [50] defines SWB through five pillars: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement. Similarly, Huppert and So [51] describe twelve components of flourishing, and Wong [52] notes that different

types of happiness contribute to overall SWB depending on context. This study adopts the PERMA model to evaluate academic staff SWB.

Psychological capital

Psychological capital (PsyCap) is a core concept of positive organizational behavior, emphasizing individual psychological resources [53]. Unlike traditional forms of capital such as human, social, or financial capital, PsyCap represents a positive, developmental capacity that enhances performance and well-being [54, 55].

PsyCap comprises four interrelated components: self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. Self-efficacy refers to belief in one's ability to achieve goals; hope involves goal-directed determination and planning; resilience is the capacity to recover from setbacks; and optimism reflects positive expectations about the future [53, 56]. Together, these dimensions form a synergistic latent construct that predicts positive outcomes across individual and organizational contexts, including mental health, job performance, work engagement, creativity, organizational citizenship behaviors, and career success [57-62]. This study utilizes PsyCap as a mediator, assessing its role in enhancing both subjective well-being and academic career success.

Protean career orientation (PCO) – self-directed career management (SDCM) and Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

Individuals with a strong protean career orientation evaluate their professional success according to personal values rather than external benchmarks such as organizational career paths [63]. Employees with high PCO are more likely to leave unsatisfying positions and actively pursue roles aligned with their internal beliefs, leading to higher job satisfaction and better career achievements [37]. This orientation is also associated with broader life satisfaction and psychological success, encompassing accomplishments beyond work, such as family well-being and physical health [64].

Empirical studies support the connection between PCO and well-being. Rahim and Zainal [65] found that only the self-directed dimension of PCO positively influenced psychological well-being among Malaysian professional engineers, while the values-driven dimension did not. Similarly, Li [66] observed a positive relationship between PCO and psychological well-being among knowledge workers. Building on these findings, the current study focuses exclusively on self-directed career management as a key component of PCO.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Self-directed career management positively influences subjective well-being.

Work-family conflict (WFC) and academic career success (ACS)

Traditional gender norms often assign men the primary role of financial provider, while women are expected to focus on childcare and household responsibilities [67, 68]. These role expectations influence experiences of work-family conflict, with women frequently facing higher levels of role overload due to competing work and family obligations [69-71].

Research has shown that women often advance more slowly in their careers due to these additional non-work responsibilities [72, 73]. Family obligations can amplify the negative effects of work-family conflict on career success, particularly for women with children or limited spousal support [74, 75]. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Work-family conflict negatively affects academic career success.

Subjective Well-Being (SWB) and academic career success (ACS)

Subjective well-being, encompassing life satisfaction, happiness, and optimism, has been linked to numerous positive outcomes, including better physical health, stronger social relationships, and career success [76-78]. Recent studies indicate that SWB can enhance career outcomes. For instance, Gordon and Shi [79] found that recovery experiences among hotel managers positively influenced both SWB and subjective career success.

Evidence also suggests a reciprocal relationship between SWB and work success. While career achievements can improve well-being, high-achieving individuals may experience work-life imbalance, stress, or health issues that reduce overall satisfaction [80, 81]. Accordingly, the study hypothesizes:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Subjective well-being positively influences academic career success.

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) as a mediator between SDCM and ACS

Psychological capital (PsyCap) has been identified as a key resource linking protean career orientation to positive work outcomes. Studies by Direnzo and Greenhaus [82] and Direnzo *et al.* [35] highlight PsyCap's role in connecting PCO with enhanced performance and life satisfaction. PsyCap, composed of self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, enables individuals to leverage personal resources effectively to achieve career success [53, 83].

Empirical evidence further supports PsyCap as a mediator. Mustafa *et al.* [84] demonstrated that PsyCap not only predicts academic career success directly but also mediates the relationship between PCO and professional achievement among university faculty. Given that self-directed career management is a critical dimension of PCO, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Psychological capital mediates the relationship between self-directed career management and academic career success.

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) as a mediator between work-family conflict (WFC) and subjective well-being (SWB)

Psychological capital (PsyCap) represents a positive psychological resource that individuals can draw upon to cope with challenges and enhance well-being [85]. Research has consistently shown that PsyCap contributes to higher individual well-being [86, 87]. For example, Datu and Valdez [88] found that PsyCap positively predicts life satisfaction, a key dimension of overall well-being. Similarly, Zhao and You [87] demonstrated that PsyCap enhances occupational well-being through the management of emotional labor, while studies among primary and secondary school teachers indicate a significant positive relationship between PsyCap and subjective well-being [89].

High levels of work-family conflict can deplete PsyCap, reducing its protective effects and resulting in lower life satisfaction, work satisfaction, and psychological well-being. Given these findings, PsyCap is considered a critical mediator linking work-family conflict to subjective well-being.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Psychological capital mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and subjective well-being.

Psychological capital (PsyCap) as a mediator between self-directed career Management (SDCM) and subjective well-being (SWB)

Drawing on the Job Demands-Resources model, Li [66] suggests that self-directed career management, a dimension of protean career orientation, enables knowledge workers to cultivate personal resources, including PsyCap, which in turn enhances success and life satisfaction. PsyCap can partially buffer the effects of self-directed career management on well-being, fostering greater psychological resilience and fulfillment.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Psychological capital mediates the relationship between self-directed career management and subjective well-being.

Gender, generational cohort, and educational level as moderators

The increasing demands of academic work and the effort required to balance professional and personal responsibilities can intensify work-family conflict. Previous studies in various contexts—including teaching staff in the United Kingdom [90], academic staff in Portugal [16], and Romania [91]—indicate that work-family conflict negatively impacts academic career success. Factors such as performance evaluations, tight deadlines, excessive administrative tasks, and extended working hours further exacerbate stress and hinder career development [92].

Although research is limited in the Indonesian context, findings suggest that lecturers face significant career development challenges, including pressures to pursue higher education, insufficiently fair performance assessments, and the demand for research funding and publications [10-13]. Gender differences also play a role: female academics often experience lower opportunities to achieve optimal career progression and encounter additional barriers and discrimination [14-16]. Age is another determinant, with younger academics facing higher publication pressures, which can negatively affect career success [16, 17].

Based on these considerations, the study examines whether gender, generational cohort (gen-type), and educational level moderate the relationships between WFC, SDCM, SWB, and ACS.

Hypotheses

H7: Gender moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and academic career success.

H8: Generational cohort (gen-type) moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and academic career success.

H9: Educational level moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and academic career success.

H10: Gender moderates the relationships among self-directed career management, subjective well-being, and academic career success.

H11: Generational cohort (gen-type) moderates the relationships among self-directed career management, subjective well-being, and academic career success.

H12: Educational level moderates the relationships among self-directed career management, subjective well-being, and academic career success.

Method

Sample and Measurement

This study focused on academic staff from the Faculty of Economics and Business at two public and two private universities in Padang City, Indonesia. A total of 146 participants were included, consisting of 48 male and 97 female faculty members. All participants were either civil servant lecturers or permanent academic staff, married or widowed, and had a minimum of one year of professional experience.

Data collection employed a combination of online surveys via Google Forms and face-to-face distribution. The research was funded by the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Andalas under the Indonesian Ministry of Higher Education in 2023, following a competitive review process conducted by qualified reviewers and an ethics committee.

The study did not collect sensitive personal information nor involve any medical or clinical procedures. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, with all respondents being legally competent adults (18 years or older). Online participants provided consent through a screening question before beginning the survey, while face-to-face respondents gave verbal consent. All data were strictly used for research purposes, with confidentiality ensured.

Although the study posed minimal risk and did not include vulnerable groups, ethical principles were rigorously upheld in line with international standards, including the Declaration of Helsinki and the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics. This included informed consent, voluntary participation, ethics committee approval, and protection of participants' information.

Participants' responses were analyzed according to their perceptions. The sample was categorized by generational cohort—Baby Boomers (1), Gen X (2), and Gen Y (3)—and by gender, with males coded as 1 and females as 2. Academic Career Success (ACS) was assessed based on functional academic ranks: CPNS/non-functional or permanent lecturer (1), expert assistant (2), lecturer (3), associate professor (4), and professor (5). Further details on demographic characteristics and measurement items are provided in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Respondents profile.

Description	Total	Percentile	Description	Total	Percentile
Gender			Education		
Male	48	33%	Master	101	70%
Female	97	67%	Ongoing study	7	5%
			Doctorate	36	25%
Generation Type (Psy-tipe)			Postdoc	1	1%
59-77 years / *Baby Boomer*	13	9%	Total	145	100%
43-58 years / *X Generation*	70	48%			
26-42 years / *Y Generation*	62	43%	Marital Status		
Academic Career Level			Married	135	93%
Non-functional	9	6%	Divorced	3	2%
Expert assistant	32	22%	Widow	7	5%
Lecturer	86	59%	University Status		
Associate Professor	16	11%	Public	93	64%
Professor	3	2%	Private	52	36%

Research design and measurement

This study adopts a quantitative approach, with data analyzed using SmartPLS version 4.1.0.9. Participants' educational attainment was categorized into four levels: master's degree (1), ongoing master's study (2), doctoral degree (3), and postdoctoral study (4). Career orientation was assessed via the self-directed career management (SDCM) dimension of the Protean Career construct, comprising eight items adapted from Briscoe *et al.* [38].

Work-family conflict (WFC) was measured using ten items from Netemeyer *et al.* [43], divided equally into work-to-family conflict (WIF, 5 items) and family-to-work conflict (FIW, 5 items). Subjective well-being (SWB) was evaluated with fifteen items adapted from Butler and Kern [47]. Psychological capital (PsyCap) was measured using twelve items from Avey *et al.* [93], encompassing four subdimensions: self-efficacy (3 items), hope (3 items), resilience (3 items), and optimism (3 items). All items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), except for SWB, which used a 0–6 scale (0 = never/terrible, 6 = always/excellent).

Data analysis

The research employed SmartPLS 4.1.0.9 to examine the proposed model using a reflective measurement approach. Analysis began with evaluation of the outer model, following standard procedures for reflective constructs. Four key steps were applied:

1. **Indicator Reliability:** Item loadings between 0.40 and 0.708 were considered for removal only if doing so improved internal consistency, reliability, or convergent validity [94]. Outer loadings above 0.5 were retained, consistent with common practices in social science research [95].

2. **Internal Consistency Reliability:** Composite reliability metrics, including ρA and ρC, ranged from 0.80 to 0.95, indicating strong reliability.

3. **Convergent Validity:** Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.50, confirming acceptable convergent validity **(Table 2)**.

4. **Discriminant Validity:** Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios were below the 0.85 threshold, supporting discriminant validity between constructs **(Table 3)**.

This systematic approach ensured that the measurement model met the necessary criteria for reliability and validity before evaluating the structural relationships in the model.

Table 2. Construct validity and reliability assessment results.

Construct and items	Outer loading	CR rho_a	CR rho_c	AVE
Self-Directed Career Management (SDCM)				
When development opportunities have not been offered by my company, I've sought them out on my own.	0.640	0.867	0.868	0.625
I am responsible for my success or failure in my career.	0.786			
Overall, I have a very independent, self-directed career.	0.880			
Freedom to choose my own career path is one of my most important values (SDCM4).	0.836			
Psychological Capital (Psy-cap)				
Self-efficacy				
I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management.	0.814	0.932	0.936	0.551
I feel confident contributing to discussions about the company's strategy.	0.835			
I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues.	0.808			
Hope				
Right now I see myself as being pretty successful at work.	0.661			
I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals.	0.787			
At this time, I am meeting the work goals that I have set for myself.	0.597			
Resilience				
I can be 'on my own' so to speak at work if I have to.	0.797			
I usually take stressful things at work in stride.	0.633			
I can get through difficult times at work because I've experienced difficulty before.	0.736			
Optimism				
I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job.	0.809			
I'm optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work.	0.750			
When things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best	0.630			
Subjective Well-being (SWB)				
Positive emotion				
How often do you feel joyful?	0.786	0.919	0.924	0.508
How often do you feel positive?	0.802			
To what extent do you feel contented?	0.627			
Engagement				
How often do you become absorbed in what you are doing?	0.531			
To what extent do you feel excited and interested in things?	0.610			
Relationship				
To what extent have you been feeling loved?	0.599			
Meaning				
To what extent do you lead a purposeful and meaningful life?	0.778			
To what extent do you feel that what you do in your life is valuable and worthwhile?	0.838			
To what extent do you generally feel you have a sense of direction in your life?	0.784			
Accomplishment				
How much of the time do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your goals?	0.735			
How often do you achieve the important goals you have set for yourself?	0.705			
How often are you able to handle your responsibilities?	0.683			
Work-Family Conflict (WFC)				
Work to family conflict				
My work prevents me from spending sufficient quality time with my family.	0.793	0.935	0.923	0.575
There is no time left at the end of the day to do the things I'd like at home (e.g. chores and leisure activities).	0.832			
My family misses out because of my work commitments.	0.777			
My work has a negative impact on my family life.	0.849			
Working often makes me irritable or short-tempered at home.	0.848			
Family to work conflict				
My work performance suffers because of my personal and family commitments.	0.794			
Family-related concerns or responsibilities often distract me at work.	0.734			
My family has a negative impact on my day-to-day work duties.	0.550			

It is difficult to concentrate at work because I am so exhausted from family responsibilities.	0.582

Note: There were some items deleted with cut-off outer loading values <0.5: four items from SCDM (items 5–8), three items from SWB (items 6, 7 & 9) and one item from WFC (item 8).

Table 3. Discriminant validity - Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) – matrix.

Construct	ACS	CDSM	GEN type	Gender	Psy-Cap	SWB
ACS						
CDSM	0.067					
GEN Type	0.451	0.053				
Gender	0.125	0.043	0.144			
Psy-Cap	0.266	0.496	0.214	0.137		
SWB	0.095	0.413	0.115	0.094	0.717	
WFC	0.066	0.249	0.160	0.114	0.396	0.373

Structural Model Results

The structural model results, summarized in **Table 4**, indicate that the exogenous constructs collectively explain 33% of the variance in Academic Career Success (ACS). According to Hair *et al.* [94], an effect is typically considered weak when it accounts for less than 50% of the variance. The model explains 50.9% of the variance in Subjective Well-Being (SWB), with the remaining 49.1% attributable to factors not examined in this study. Since the R^2 value is slightly above 0.5, this is classified as a moderate effect [94].

The R^2 value for Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is 0.297, suggesting that Self-Directed Career Management (SDCM) and Work-Family Conflict (WFC) together account for approximately 29.7% of the variance in PsyCap among academic staff. Based on Cohen [96], an R^2 value exceeding 0.25 is considered to have a meaningful impact. Therefore, despite some values being below the conventional 0.5 threshold, the findings indicate that the predictors in this study exert a substantial influence on ACS, PsyCap, and SWB.

Table 4. R-Square effect size

Construct	R-square	R-square adjusted	Type of prediction	
			Hair *et al.* (2022)	Cohen (2008)
ACS	0.330	0.269	Week	Substantial
Psy-Cap	0.297	0.288	Week	Substantial
SWB	0.509	0.480	Moderate	Substantial

Note: Standard error p_values < 0.05.

Effect Size (f^2) analysis

Table 5 presents the f^2 values, which indicate the individual contribution of each independent variable to the variance in the dependent variables. Following Hair *et al.* [94], an f^2 value of 0.02 is considered small, 0.15 is moderate, and 0.35 or higher is regarded as substantial.

The analysis shows that generational cohort (Gen-type) has the largest effect on Academic Career Success (ACS), contributing 10.6% to the variance; however, this is categorized as a small effect. Psychological Capital (PsyCap) exhibits the strongest influence on Subjective Well-Being (SWB), explaining 64.1% of the variance, representing a substantial effect. Meanwhile, Self-Directed Career Management (SDCM) is the primary contributor to PsyCap, accounting for 20.7% of its variance, which is interpreted as a moderate effect.

These results highlight the differential impact of predictors on the key outcomes, with PsyCap playing a particularly prominent role in shaping SWB, while SDCM and generational factors contribute meaningfully to PsyCap and ACS, respectively.

Table 5. f-Square effect size

Variables	ACS	Psy-Cap	SWB
Edu	0.081		
Generation Type	0.106		
Gender			0.033
Psy-Cap	0.067		0.642
SDCM		0.207	
WFC		0.126	
Edu x SDCM			0.028
Edu x WFC	0.024		
ACS			
Psy-tipe x SDCM			0.012

Edu x SWB	0.002	
Psy-tipe x SWB	0.017	
Gender x SDCM		0.016
Edu x SDCM		0.028
Edu x WFC	0.024	

Note: f value effect 0.02 is small; 0.15 is moderate and 0.35 and more is substantial.

Predictive relevance and model accuracy

The predictive capability of the model was assessed using both R^2 and Q^2 values. While R^2 evaluates the explanatory power of the model within the current sample, Q^2 assesses its predictive relevance beyond the observed data. Positive Q^2 values indicate that the PLS-SEM model has the capacity to predict certain endogenous constructs.

In this study, the Q^2 analysis revealed that Academic Career Success (ACS) and Psychological Capital (PsyCap) demonstrate relatively high predictive relevance. In contrast, some Subjective Well-Being (SWB) items, such as SWB3 (−0.051) and SWB4 (−0.041), yielded negative Q^2predict values, indicating limited predictive relevance for these indicators.

Model accuracy was further examined using Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) and Mean Absolute Error (MAE). Overall, lower RMSE and MAE values suggest strong predictive accuracy for the endogenous variables (ACS, PsyCap, and SWB). Comparison between the PLS-SEM and linear models (LM) indicated that PLS-SEM generally provided more precise predictions. For example, SWB13 exhibited RMSE values of 0.973 (PLS-SEM) and 1.049 (LM), reflecting superior performance of the PLS-SEM model. Some indicators, such as PsyC4 and SWB3, showed higher RMSE, reflecting less precise prediction.

Among the constructs, PsyCap had the highest Q^2predict value (0.232), followed by ACS (0.190), indicating moderate predictive performance. SWB showed a lower Q^2predict value of 0.092, representing weak predictive relevance. Overall, as summarized in **Table 7**, the PLS-SEM model (average loss = 0.827) outperformed the Importance-Performance Analysis (IA) model (average loss = 0.902), with a statistically significant p-value of 0.019, confirming the model's robust predictive capability.

Table 6. PLSpredict LV summary

Constructs	Q^2 predict	RMSE	MAE	Prediction
ACS	0.190	0.915	0.715	Moderate
Psy-Cap	0.232	0.904	0.666	Moderate
SWB	0.092	0.972	0.751	Weak

Note: Q^2predict value < 0.15 is categorized as weak; 0.15–0.35 is moderate and greater than 0.35 is str.

Table 7. CVPAT LV summary

Construct	PLS loss	IA loss	Average loss difference	*t* value	*p* value
ACS	0.496	0.610	−0.114	2.276	0.024
Psy-Cap	0.829	0.942	−0.113	2.435	0.016
SWB	0.852	0.885	−0.034	1.049	0.296
Overall	**0.827**	**0.902**	**−0.075**	**2.372**	**0.019**

*Note:*p-value < 0.05.

Next, we evaluate the testing hypotheses. The standard-value two-tailed test 1.96 is employed in this study, with p-values less than 5%. The following is the outcome of the bootstrapping analysis **(Table 8)**:

Table 8. Path coefficients direct effect

	Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation	*T* statistics	*p* values	Decision
	Edu -> ACS	0.337	0.324	0.100	3.362	0.001	Supported
	Gen-tipe -> ACS	−0.308	−0.310	0.077	3.999	0.000	Supported
	Gender -> SWB	0.274	0.283	0.136	2.007	0.045	Supported
	Psy-Cap -> ACS	0.317	0.338	0.125	2.525	0.012	Supported
	Psy-Cap -> SWB	0.658	0.662	0.085	7.771	0.000	Supported
	WFC -> Psy-Cap	−0.305	−0.316	0.086	3.556	0.000	Supported
	SDCM -> Psy-Cap	0.391	0.401	0.074	5.301	0.000	Supported
H1	SDCM -> SWB	−0.009	0.007	0.123	0.077	0.938	Not Supported
H2	WFC -> ACS	−0.080	−0.072	0.176	0.456	0.648	Not Supported
H3	SWB -> ACS	−0.138	−0.143	0.150	0.918	0.359	Not Supported

Note: Standard error *p*-values <0.05.

Hypothesis testing and mediation analysis

Direct, indirect, and moderating effects were evaluated using the bootstrapping procedure. The analysis revealed that some hypotheses were supported, while others were not. As presented in **Table 8**, hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 were not supported through direct paths, indicating that Self-Directed Career Management (SDCM), Work-Family Conflict (WFC), and Subjective Well-Being (SWB) did not exert significant direct effects on Academic Career Success (ACS) or SWB. However, these variables exhibited significant indirect effects mediated by Psychological Capital (PsyCap).

Table 9 highlights the critical mediating role of PsyCap. Specifically, PsyCap significantly mediates the relationships between SDCM and ACS (H4), WFC and SWB (H5), and SDCM and SWB (H6), while also exerting a significant direct effect on both SWB and ACS. Furthermore, SDCM and WFC were found to have significant direct effects on PsyCap, reinforcing its function as a central mechanism linking career management and work-family dynamics to both subjective well-being and career success among academic staff.

Table 9. Path coefficients specific mediating effect

		Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	*T* statistics	*p* values	Decision
H4	SDCM -> Psy-Cap -> ACS	0.124	0.135	0.054	2.292	0.022	Supported
H5	WFC -> Psy-Cap -> SWB	−0.201	−0.212	0.071	2.806	0.005	Supported
H6	SDCM -> Psy-Cap -> SWB	0.257	0.265	0.056	4.605	0.000	Supported

Note: Standard error *p*-values <0.06.

Moderation analysis

Contrary to expectations, the proposed moderating effects of gender, generational cohort (Gen-type), and educational level were not supported, as shown in **Table 10**. Instead, these demographic factors demonstrated significant direct effects on the outcome variables. Specifically, educational attainment was positively associated with Academic Career Success (ACS), generational cohort influenced ACS, and gender showed a significant relationship with Subjective Well-Being (SWB) **(Table 8)**. These findings suggest that while demographic characteristics do not alter the strength of relationships between the predictors and outcomes, they independently contribute to variations in both ACS and SWB among academic staff.

Table 10. Path coefficients moderating effect: Mean, STDEV, T values, *p* values

		Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	*T* statistics	*p* values	Decision
H7	Psy-tipe x WFC -> ACS	0.011	0.017	0.100	0.115	0.908	Not Supported
H8	Gender x WFC -> ACS	0.223	0.206	0.195	1.141	0.254	Not Supported
H9	Edu x WFC -> ACS	0.239	0.228	0.130	1.845	0.065	Not Supported
H10	Psy-tipe x SDCM -> SWB -> ACS	−0.012	−0.012	0.022	0.531	0.596	Not Supported
H11	Gender x SDCM -> SWB -> ACS	−0.027	−0.021	0.038	0.712	0.477	Not Supported
H12	Edu x SDCM -> SWB -> ACS	−0.022	−0.021	0.028	0.799	0.424	Not Supported

Note: Standard error *p*-values <0.05.

Conclusion

This study provides several key insights regarding the factors influencing Academic Career Success (ACS) and Subjective Well-Being (SWB) among academic staff in Indonesia's Faculty of Economics and Business. First, Psychological Capital (PsyCap) emerged as a critical mediating variable, linking Self-Directed Career Management (SDCM) to ACS (H4), Work-Family Conflict (WFC) to SWB (H5), and SDCM to SWB (H6), while also exerting a significant direct effect on ACS. Consequently, SDCM, WFC, and SWB influence ACS indirectly, which explains the lack of support for hypotheses H1, H2, and H3.

Second, the model's quality, as indicated by R^2 effect sizes and PLS Q^2 predictive values, suggests moderate predictive relevance, indicating that SDCM and WFC are meaningful predictors of ACS, PsyCap, and SWB at the individual level. Third, the anticipated moderating roles of gender, generational cohort (Baby Boomer, Gen X, Gen Y), and educational level were not supported (H7–H12). Instead, generational cohort and educational attainment demonstrated direct and significant effects on ACS, while gender had a direct effect on SWB. Specifically, older generations and those with higher educational qualifications are more likely to achieve higher ACS, whereas men and women show no significant difference in ACS, although women report higher SWB than men.

Finally, these findings offer a nuanced understanding of academic staff's career success and well-being in Indonesia, highlighting the centrality of PsyCap and the influence of demographic characteristics on professional and personal outcomes.

Discussion

The study focused on ACS at the individual level, exploring the relationships among SDCM, WFC, SWB, and PsyCap, with gender, generational cohort, and educational level as potential moderators. The results indicate that H1 (SDCM → SWB), H2 (WFC → ACS), and H3 (SWB → ACS) were not supported through direct paths, limiting the moderating effects' significance. Only PsyCap exhibited strong mediating effects, connecting SDCM and WFC to SWB and ACS. Notably, generational cohort and education had direct effects on ACS, and gender directly influenced SWB. These findings align with prior research suggesting that gender does not always moderate academic career outcomes [97, 98].

Several strategies are suggested to enhance model performance. First, addressing indicators with high error—particularly in SWB—may improve predictive accuracy. Second, revising SWB measurement or incorporating additional predictive methods could strengthen model validity. Third, PsyCap and ACS demonstrated strong predictive capability, suggesting potential for practical applications such as PsyCap-based interventions. Lastly, further validation is recommended for SWB indicators with negative Q^2predict values to reduce noise and improve model fit.

The results also indicate that higher educational attainment and older generational cohorts are associated with greater ACS, likely reflecting accumulated experience, competencies, and career tenure. This is consistent with prior studies emphasizing the importance of education and experience in professional success [1, 99]. In contrast, gender was not a significant determinant of ACS, diverging from previous research indicating that women face greater obstacles in career progression [14-16].

PsyCap emerged as the most influential factor affecting SWB, emphasizing the importance of psychological resources in personal well-being. SDCM and WFC significantly impact PsyCap, suggesting that academic staff with clear career orientation and autonomy, alongside balanced work-family integration, are more likely to develop stronger PsyCap, enhancing both their professional success and personal well-being. These findings support prior research highlighting PsyCap as a mediator linking career self-management and professional outcomes [35, 82, 84].

Implications

The findings of this study carry several practical and policy implications for enhancing academic career outcomes and well-being:

1. **Psychological Capital (PsyCap) as a central resource:** PsyCap functions as both a mediator and predictor of academic staff's subjective well-being (SWB) and academic career success (ACS). Institutions should therefore develop and expand self-development programs that strengthen lecturers' self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, enabling them to navigate professional challenges effectively, irrespective of gender.
2. **Importance of Self-Directed Career Management (SDCM) and Work-Family Conflict (WFC):** Both variables significantly influence PsyCap and, subsequently, well-being. Married academic staff, in particular, should be encouraged to set clear professional goals early and manage work-life conflicts effectively to optimize their career development and personal satisfaction.
3. **Gender equality in academic careers:** Gender does not significantly affect ACS, indicating equal opportunities for men and women in achieving academic excellence. Supporting all academic personnel in developing both professional competencies and psychological capital can help them realize their full potential, while fostering equitable institutional practices.
4. **Generational differences:** Generational cohort significantly affects ACS. Younger academics should pursue higher education and gain professional experience to enhance their career prospects. In particular, staff with master's degrees are encouraged to progress to doctoral studies to increase their potential for academic career success.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study focused exclusively on ACS and SWB at the individual level, examining SDCM and WFC as predictors, PsyCap as a mediator, and gender, generational cohort, and educational level as moderators. While the PLS-SEM model demonstrated strong predictive ability for some constructs (e.g., PsyCap and ACS), SWB showed lower predictive accuracy, evidenced by negative Q^2predict values and higher error metrics. Future research should consider the following:

1. **Refinement of SWB measurement:** Enhancing SWB constructs or incorporating additional indicators may improve predictive accuracy and model validity.

2. **Expanded sample coverage:** Increasing both the size and scope of the study population will provide a more comprehensive understanding of ACS in the Indonesian context.
3. **Incorporating multi-level analysis:** Future studies should consider variables beyond the individual level, including departmental, organizational, and community factors. For instance, while gender showed no significant effect on ACS and SWB in this study, its influence could be explored in leadership, teamwork, or peer-support contexts at the departmental level. At the organizational level, factors such as servant leadership or trans-collegial leadership could be examined, while cultural norms and societal expectations may play a role at the community level in shaping well-being and career success.
4. **Model relevance and predictive utility:** The current model showed moderate predictive relevance for ACS ($R^2 = 0.33$, $Q^2predict = 0.190$) and weaker predictive power for SWB ($R^2 = 0.509$, $Q^2predict = 0.092$), indicating that approximately 67% of the variance in ACS is influenced by factors outside the individual's control. Future research could integrate additional predictors to better account for these external influences and enhance the robustness of the model.

By addressing these areas, future studies can provide a more nuanced understanding of academic career success and well-being, accounting for both individual-level and broader contextual factors.

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