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Turning ideas into actions! How research on identity, psychological resources, and leadership support can inform career coaching

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to contribute new insights to the Career Coaching field, based on findings drawn from empirical research on career transition. The paper examines the relationship between future work self and proactive career behaviours in an employed, multinational sample considering or experiencing a career transition. It evaluates whether psychological resources for career transition and perceived supervisory support positively moderate this relationship. A quantitative survey design was implemented and data analysed through linear regression analyses. The findings confirm that individuals with a clearer idea of their future work self reported higher levels of proactive behaviours. Moreover, participants with greater psychological resources for career transition and supervisory support in career development found it easier to translate their future work self vision into specific career-oriented behaviours. The paper provides recommendations on how Career Coaching practitioners can utilise these findings when devising interventions to facilitate a career transition process.

Key Words: Career coaching, career transition, future work self, proactive career behaviour, psychological resource, supervisory support

Practice Points

1. This paper is relevant to Coaching practitioners and/or anyone supporting employees throughout a career transition.
2. The paper contributes with an integrative, theoretical framework, highlighting the significance of both individual and contextual factors in shaping one's career.

3. Practitioners can use the following findings in developing interventions leading to successful career transitions during coaching conversations:

- Identity-based future work self vision motivates proactive career behaviours aimed at bringing the vision to life.
- Psychological resources and supervisory support bring additional value to a successful career transition.

Introduction

The swift-changing pace of post-modern society has had a profound effect on all areas of life, including the work domain, where people have been experiencing significantly increased numbers of career transitions (Savickas, 2011). The traditional view of a career as a sequence of linear, planned events of moving up within the hierarchy (Arnold, 1997), has given way to new career perspectives, like the protean (Hall, 2004) and the boundaryless careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 2001). These concepts capture a different view on person-environment fit in the workplace. Individuals nowadays adopt self-guided vocational behaviours so as to fulfil their sense of self and their career goals, scarcely relying solely on employers to enable professional development. Furthermore, job opportunities are no longer limited to the boundaries of a single employment setting (Briscoe, Hall, & DeMuth, 2006).

Taking into consideration the shift in the dynamics of a career concept and the indispensable role it plays in creating one's identity, it is no surprise that 'career change' has become a recurring topic of numerous coaching sessions (Yates, Oginni, Olway, & Petzold, 2017).

Therefore, it has become increasingly important for Coaching practitioners to understand the comprehensiveness of a career transition, particularly the factors that encourage an effective change.

Yates et al. (2017) note that within Coaching practice, the theoretical contribution is not yet given prominence. Similarly, Career Coaching is devoid of theoretically-supported, evidence-based practice. For Career Coaching practitioners, this implies they may have to turn to other, more theoretically-established fields so as to fully comprehend the career transition process and avail themselves of frameworks to support their clients' transition. Yates and her colleagues (2017) suggest that career choice and development theories are a fruitful field for a Career Coach to refer to.

From as early as Super's (1992) ideas on career growth to post-modern career theories (e.g., Bright & Pryor, 2011), it has been purported that both internal as well as external factors synergistically shape a career change. Therefore, it is argued that career transition is not an isolated event in a person's life but a process influenced by a variety of factors. Frameworks and research acknowledging the comprehensiveness of a career change, would thereby add value to Career Coaching practice.

The aim of this study is to explore the underlying motivations, as well as the circumstances leading to a successful career change in a multinational, employed sample. It investigates whether the identity-based motivation of future work self encourages proactive career behaviours during a career transition, which are reported to facilitate successful career outcomes (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012). Although, there is some research supporting this claim, there are virtually no studies investigating the *conditions* under which the positive effect of future work self on proactive career behaviours is enhanced. Consequently, to address the gap in the literature, the concepts of psychological resources for career transition and perceived supervisory support are evaluated as potential moderators of this relationship,

determining both individual and environmental factors shaping a career transition.

The research also aims to respond to recurring calls from the Coaching profession for increased evidence-based theory as a starting point of a validated Coaching practice. Study outcomes can provide Coaching practitioners with a theoretical framework to utilise in evaluating a coachee's initial 'state of mind' and devising individualised career coaching interventions, promoting a successful transition.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Future Work Self

Future work self is defined as a hoped-for, future-focused mental representation of the self in the work domain that differs from the current work self (Strauss et al., 2012). This construct originates from research on possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986), referring to dynamic identities and self-representations of what individuals believe they were (past selves), what they are (current selves), who they wish to become (hoped-for possible selves), and also who they avoid becoming (feared selves) (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

Hoped-for possible selves provide a vital 'link between the self-concept and motivation' (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954), being a source of the identity-driven force that serves as an incentive for future behaviour, consistent with one's dispositions, values, and interests (Oyserman & James, 2011).

Future work selves are posited to have a powerful motivational influence on defining self-set goals, as well as the generation of self-regulated strategies to achieve these goals, and, thus, influence future career outcomes (Strauss et al., 2012). As per Strauss et al. (2012), this influence stems from three theoretical underpinnings. First, based on goal setting theory (Locke, 1991), self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987), and social cognitive theory (Bandura,

2001), it is proposed that the discrepancy between the current and future self serves as a motivator for self-regulated behaviour in attaining desired work self (Strauss et al., 2012). Second, future work selves are regarded as a part of the identity construction (Dunkel, 2000). Through future selves, individuals have the freedom of exploring and reinventing themselves in a playful, creative manner by considering different possibilities until they have found a self, consistent with their values and current desires (Ibarra, 2003b). The third theoretical contribution comes from the research on future-oriented cognitive processes (Taylor, Pham, Rivkin, & Armor, 1998). Through mental simulation (envisioning) of the desired future, individuals are able to project themselves in the future, isolate potential incongruities between the current and future self, and adopt behaviours that bridge the gap between selves.

Although extensive research has focused on the broader concept of possible selves, less attention has been given to future work selves. Apart from a continuance of interest by Strauss and Parker (2018), a few studies carried out in China (Cai et al., 2015; Guan et al., 2014; Guan et al., 2017; Lin et al., 2016; Yu et al., 2016; C. Zhang, Hirschi, Herrmann, Wei, & J. Zhang, 2017; Y. Zhang, Liao, Yan, & Guo, 2014), and Taber and Blankmeyer's (2015) research, there are no other studies conducted on this topic. Moreover, the majority of the mentioned research involved student samples, with exception of Lin et al. (2016), Strauss and Parker (2018), Strauss et al. (2012), Yu et al. (2016), and Zhang et al. (2014), who sampled working populations.

Strauss et al. (2012) propose that the motivating effect of future work self is measured by the degree of its salience, indicating how easy it is for an individual to imagine their future work self and how clear this vision is. Higher future work self salience was reported to result in greater proactivity in career development.

Proactive Career Behaviours

Crant (2000) describes proactive behaviours as advancing existing conditions or creating new opportunities by adopting a more agentic view in shaping tasks, roles, and jobs in one's own career development. Proactive behaviours encompass future-focused, self-started, and change-oriented quality (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010).

An empirical study by Claes and Ruiz-Quintanilla (1998) differentiated between four different types of proactive career behaviours: 1) *career planning*, behaviours shaping future career e.g., exploring different options, planning, and goal-setting; 2) *skill development*, behaviours leading to acquiring numerous skills related to future career; 3) *consultation behaviour*, pursuing advice, help, or information; and 4) *networking behaviour*, aimed at building social capital (Crant, 2000).

Proactive career behaviours were associated with enhanced job performance (Crant, 1995), successful work-related outcomes (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000), faster career progress (Seibert, Cramer, & Crant, 2001), and obtainment of new employment (Saks & Ashforth, 1999). Strauss et al. (2012) confirmed that employees with a more articulate idea of their future work selves reported adopting higher levels of proactive career-oriented behaviours.

However, merely three studies examined the role of future work self in facilitating proactive career behaviours (Straus et al., 2012; Strauss & Parker, 2018; Taber & Blankmeyer, 2015) and this current study aims to add further understanding. Therefore, based on existing research findings, this study predicts that future work self salience will enhance proactive career behaviours in an adult, working, multinational sample.

Hypothesis 1: Future work self salience will positively predict proactive career behaviours in an employed sample.

Psychological Resources for Career Transition and Perceived Supervisory Support as Moderators

This paper proposes that clarity of a future work self could play a significant role in turbulent times of a career transition. However, limited research regarding the conditions in which a future work self encourages proactivity during a transition creates a necessity to explore potential moderators of this relationship. So far, there has been some research on the antecedents of the relationship between future works self and various career outcomes (Cai et al., 2015; Guan et al., 2017; Strauss & Parker, 2018), as well as on the mediating factors influencing this relationship (Cai et al., 2015; Guan et al., 2017; Lin et al., 2016; Taber & Blankmeyer, 2015; Yu et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2017).

However, only Lin et al. (2016), Straus and Parker (2018), and Zhang et al. (2014) looked into potential moderators between future work self and different career outcomes. Strauss and Parker (2018) were the only ones who investigated moderating effects on the relationship between future-work-self intervention and proactive skills development, introducing trait-like future orientation as a moderator. The experimental study failed to confirm that the intervention enhanced proactive skills behaviour, contradicting their previous study (Strauss et al., 2012), as well as that future orientation moderated this relationship. Moreover, the research investigated only proactive skills development as an outcome variable, disregarding the remaining three dimensions of proactive career behaviours (Straus & Parker, 2018). Lin et al. (2016) and Zhang et al. (2014) confirmed that moderating effects of supervisory coaching and general supervisory support, strengthened the positive relationship between future work self, engagement and performance; and proactive adjustment behaviour, respectively.

To the author's knowledge, no previous research has yet examined any potential

moderators between future work self and all proactive career behaviours. Consequently, the current study seeks to explore psychological resources for career transition and perceived supervisory support in career development as tentative moderators of the relationship (see *Figure 1*).

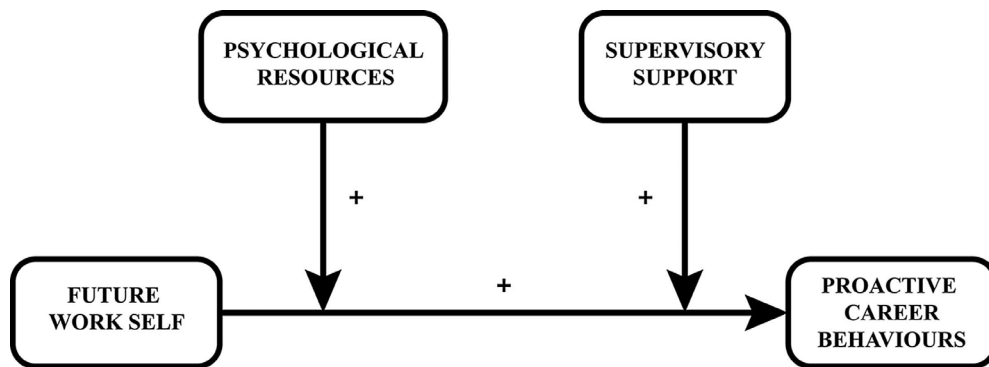


Figure 1. Hypothesised model.

The Role of Psychological Resources

As per Fernandez, Fouquereau, and Heppner (2008), a career transition is the phase of disengagement from a role or inclination to a role, and engagement in a new one. Heppner (1998) described career transition referring to three career changes:

- 1) *task change*—a shift from one set of tasks to another set within the same job and same location;
- 2) *position change*—a shift in jobs, with the same employer or to a different employer or location, but with only a slight shift in job duties; or
- 3) *occupation change*—a transition from one set of duties to a different set which might include a new work setting (p. 137).

Theories of human functioning and change adaptation, such as Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001), Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000), Super's (1992) lifespan theory, postulate there are certain individual and environmental factors that determine how one navigates a career transition process. Successful career transition is reported to largely depend on individuals' capacity to meet transition demands. Drawn from counselling psychology and research on human functioning and change adaptation, Heppner, Multon, and Johnston (1994) concluded there are five predominant psychological state-like resources prompting an individual to adopt behavioural strategies leading to an effective change: readiness - the extent to which someone is motivated to proceed with a transition; confidence - one's belief in the ability to take the actions (self-efficacy) and persevere so as to make a successful transition (Bandura, 2001); perceived control over the career transition - denoting internal locus of control (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984); social support - individuals' perception of how supportive significant people are during transitions; and decision independence - self-appraisal on whether transition decisions are made autonomously or considering needs and wants of others.

Heppner et al. (1994) designed a comprehensive Career Transition Inventory (CTI) to measure the availability or lack of these psychological resources during a career transition phase. Higher levels of psychological resources were posited to influence clarity in the vocational identification, reduced stress levels, sense of ownership of a successful outcome, less time spent in a transition phase, and ability to adapt and rectify ineffective factors of a transition (Fernandez et al., 2008; Heppner et al., 1994; Heppner, 1998; Sullivan, 1999).

Based on previous theoretical underpinnings and research findings confirming the positive effect of psychological resources on the ability to reorient identity, goals, and strategies during the transition, we propose that these factors will intensify the relationship between future work self and proactive behaviours. It is therefore suggested that individuals

with higher reported readiness to make a transition, confidence regarding the successful outcome, belief in own control over the transition, social support, and autonomous decision-making will turn their future vision into proactive career behaviours more effectively than those with average or lower resources.

Hypothesis 2: Greater perceived psychological resources will enhance the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviours.

The Role of Supervisory Support

Perceived supervisory support refers to the individual's self-appraisal of supervisor's support in various job domains, concern for employee's well-being, and acknowledgement of employee's contributions (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002).

Research confirms a positive effect of increased supervisory support on employees' performance levels (DeConinck & Johnson, 2009), affective commitment (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006), and Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2012). In comparison to organisations, supervisors are claimed to have a greater impact on certain aspects of employees' job, such as feedback about performance, mentoring, career guidance, and information on work opportunities and assignments supporting career development (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). Based on previous research proposing a crucial positive effect of supervisory performance feedback and mentoring regarding career growth (e.g., Lord, Diefendorff, Schmidt, & Hall, 2010), this study assumes that higher perceived supervisory support would be of additional value in the actualisation of a desired work self. Through guidance in identifying the discrepancy between current and future work self and generation of self-regulated goals and strategies, such support could amplify the positive effect that future work salience already has on proactive career behaviours for employees to

safely explore their future selves and seek developmental opportunities in the workplace.

Hypothesis 3: Greater perceived supervisory support will enhance the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviours.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether future work self salience predicted proactive career behaviours and whether greater psychological resources for career transition and supervisory support enhanced this relationship.

Research Design

The research hypotheses investigating the relationships amongst the mentioned variables and leveraging on previously validated scales to measure the variables dictated the implementation of a quantitative research methodology. Consequently, relationships were examined utilising correlation and hierarchical multiple linear regression analyses, employing SPSS Statistics and PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013).

Procedure

Upon approval from the institutional Ethics Committee, data was gathered using an online survey (SurveyMonkey). A combination of convenience and snowball sampling was implemented to reach the target participants. Initially, an email with a survey link was sent to all the employed contacts in the researcher's networks, inviting them to complete the survey if they were contemplating or experiencing a career transition and to circulate the survey to their networks. Additionally, a survey link was posted daily on the researcher's LinkedIn,

Facebook, InterNations, and Yammer page to enlarge the scope of participants. As an incentive, each invitation highlighted a link to the Harvard Business School article on strategies for a successful career change (Ibarra, 2003a), availed upon survey completion. Once the survey was accessed, participants could familiarise themselves with an overview of the study, ethical implications, and participants were required to provide consent for research participation. Confidentiality, anonymity, and data protection were ascertained. Each scale was introduced, asking participants to rate the statements regarding their situation. Heppner's (1998) differentiation of three types of career changes was introduced so that participants identify easily the type of transition they are undergoing.

Participants

A total of 478 respondents completed the survey. Participants who reported that they were unemployed, that they did not have a supervisor, and were not considering or undergoing a career change ($n = 50$) were automatically excluded from the study.

Furthermore, 428 participants completed the first two scales of the survey and their data were included in the analysis of Hypothesis 1. 48 participants not completing the remaining two scales were left out from the analysis of Hypotheses 2 and 3 due to the missing data. Consequently, in the analyses of Hypotheses 2 and 3, data from 380 participants who completed the subsequent survey measures were included. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the overall sample.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for demographic variables.

| <i>Variables</i> | <i>Frequency (n)</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|---|----------------------|-------------------|
| Age | | |
| 21-30 | 106 | 24.8 |
| 31-40 | 178 | 41.6 |
| 41-50 | 110 | 25.7 |
| 51-65 | 34 | 7.9 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 213 | 49.8 |
| Female | 215 | 50.2 |
| Nationalities | 95 | |
| Predominant Nationalities | | |
| American | 53 | 12.4 |
| Serbian | 50 | 11.7 |
| Australian | 33 | 7.7 |
| Canadian | 28 | 6.5 |
| Indian | 28 | 6.5 |
| Other nationalities | 236 | 55.2 |
| Temporal Distance of Career Change | | |
| Now | 177 | 41.4 |
| In 1-2 years | 161 | 37.6 |
| In 3-5 years | 69 | 16.1 |
| In 6-10 years | 21 | 4.9 |

Note. $N = 428$.

Measures

The survey consisted of four measures, alongside demographic questions, comprising 74 items overall. For all measures, participants were asked to rate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a Likert-type scale. Items were then summed to compute aggregate scores for each questionnaire.

Participants' **future work self salience** ($\alpha = 0.91$) was measured using five items

devised by Strauss et al. (2012). Participants were asked to envision their hoped-for work self and rank how easily and clearly they could recall it on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For example, 'What type of future I want in relation to my work is very clear in my mind'. Higher scores indicated greater salience.

Proactive career behaviours ($\alpha = 0.88$) were assessed using Strauss et al.'s (2012) thirteen-item scale, measuring career planning, proactive skills development, career consultation and career networking behaviours, using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For instance, 'I develop knowledge and skills in tasks critical to my future work life'. Higher scores indicated that participants engaged more in proactive career behaviours.

Psychological resources for career transition ($\alpha = 0.85$) were measured using Career transition inventory (CTI) (Heppner et al., 1994). CTI is a forty-item scale, evaluating psychological resources of adults during career transitions. Participants rated statements on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree) (reverse scored). An example item was 'The risks of this career transition are high, but I am willing to take a chance'. Higher scores signified greater perceived psychological resources.

Perceived supervisory support ($\alpha = 0.93$) was measured using Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley's (1990) nine-item scale. Participants were asked to indicate the extent of their supervisor's support in career guidance, performance feedback, challenging work assignments, and developmental opportunities on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For example, 'My supervisor gives me helpful feedback about my performance'.

All the above measures were validated by respective authors and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients indicated a good internal consistency, being above 0.7, as recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

Demographic variables. Participants were asked to answer seven demographic questions, including age group, gender, nationality, employment status, place of work, whether they had a supervisor, and temporal distance of their career transition.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, Pearson correlations, and Cronbach's Alphas were examined to summarise available data (see Table 2). Based on Evans' guide for the absolute value of r (1996), future work self salience was strongly correlated with proactive career behaviours ($r = .62, p < .001$), as expected based on previous research (Strauss et al., 2012), and moderately correlated with psychological resources ($r = .47, p < .001$). Proactive career behaviours were moderately correlated with psychological resources ($r = .55, p < .001$) and supervisory support ($r = .45, p < .001$). Future work self salience and perceived supervisory support as well as psychological resources and perceived supervisory support reported weak correlations ($r = .35, p < .001$). These results provided initial support for the hypotheses.

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, Pearson Correlations, and Alphas.

| <i>Measure</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> |
|----------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. FWS | 428 | 3.84 | 0.72 | (.91) | | | |
| 2. PCB | 428 | 3.85 | 0.62 | .62* | (.88) | | |
| 3. CTI | 380 | 3.53 | 0.53 | .47* | .55* | (.85) | |
| 4. SUP | 380 | 3.17 | 0.96 | .35* | .45* | .35* | (.93) |

Note. FWS = Future Work Self Salience; PCB = Proactive Career Behaviours; CTI = Psychological Resources; SUP = Supervisory Support.

Reliability coefficients (alpha) presented on the diagonal.

* $p < .001$.

Inferential Statistics - Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 stated that future work self salience would positively predict proactive career behaviours. The linear regression analysis of the gathered data ($N = 428$) confirmed the hypothesis, $R^2 = .39$, $F(1, 426) = 267.62$, $p < .001$, $b = 1.38$, $t(426) = 16.36$, $p < .001$ (see Table 3). Future work self salience significantly predicted approximately 39% of proactive career behaviours. Individuals with higher future work self salience reported higher levels of proactive career behaviours.

Table 3. Linear Regression Analysis for Future work Self Salience predicting Proactive Career Behaviours.

| <i>Predictor Variable</i> | <i>R</i> | <i>R²</i> | <i>β</i> |
|---------------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Future Work Self Salience | .62* | .39* | .62* |

Note. $N = 428$. * $p < .001$

Hypothesis 2 posited that greater perceived psychological resources would positively moderate the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviours.

The data sample comprising of four clearly distinguishable subgroups of individuals going through or considering a career transition at different times (see Table 1), separate moderation analyses were conducted for each of these sub-samples for potential significant interactions.

Ultimately, only for the individuals experiencing a career transition at the moment of data collection ($n = 176$) did psychological resources significantly enhance the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviours.

Future work self salience and psychological resources as predictors accounted for the significant portion of variance (88%) in proactivity, $R^2 = .875$, $F(2, 173) = 605.95$, $p < .001$.

The interaction term between future work self salience and psychological resources added a significant variance above and beyond the variance explained by the previous two variables,

$\Delta R^2 = .008$, $\Delta F(1, 172) = 11.61$, $p < .01$, $b = .012$, $t(172) = 3.41$, $p < .01$ (see Table 4).

Therefore, for participants who were experiencing a career transition at the time of data collection, psychological resources had a moderating effect on the relationship between future self and proactive career behaviours.

Table 4. Hierarchical Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Proactive Career Behaviours for Individuals Experiencing Career Transition at the Moment of Data Collection.

| <i>Steps and Predictor Variables</i> | <i>R²</i> | <i>ΔR²</i> | <i>β</i> |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Step 1: Future Work Self Salience (FWS) | .598* | | .77* |
| Step 2: Psychological Resources (CTI) | .875* | .277* | .69* |
| Step 3: FWS x CTI | .883* | .008* | .12** |

Note. $n = 176$. * $p < .001$. ** $p < .001$

To examine the interaction relationship further, the interaction plot was graphed, indicating that psychological resources had an enhancing effect on the relationship between future work self and proactivity. Figure 2 shows that as the individual scores for psychological resources increased, the relationship between future work self and psychological resources became stronger, supporting Hypothesis 2 for a limited sample.

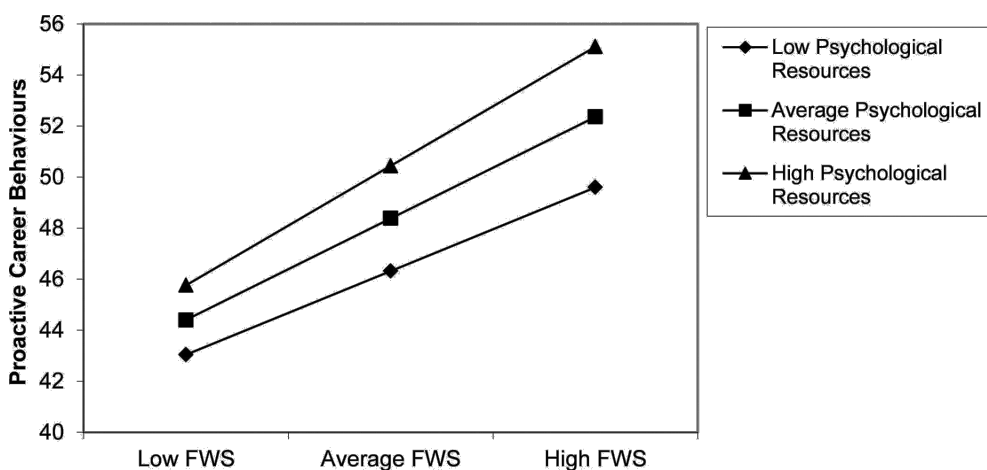


Figure 2. Interaction between future work self salience (FWS) and psychological resources in predicting proactive career behaviours.

Hypothesis 3 stated that greater perceived supervisory support would enhance the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviours. Future work self and supervisory support as predictors accounted for significant portion of variance (46%) in proactivity, $R^2 = .46$, $F(2, 377) = 161.03$, $p < .001$. Ultimately, the interaction term accounted for additional significant variance above and beyond what was explained by the previous two variables, $\Delta R^2 = .035$, $\Delta F(1, 376) = 25.73$, $p < .001$, $b = .04$, $t(376) = 5.07$, $p < .001$ (see Table 5). Perceived supervisory support moderated the relationship between future self and proactive career behaviours.

Table 5. Hierarchical Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Proactive Career Behaviours.

| <i>Steps and Predictor Variables</i> | <i>R²</i> | <i>ΔR²</i> | <i>β</i> |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Step 1: Future Work Self Salience (FWS) | .402* | | .63* |
| Step 2: Perceived Supervisory Support (SUP) | .461* | .058* | .26* |
| Step 3: FWS x SUP | .495* | .035* | .19* |

Note. $N = 380$. * $p < .001$

To illustrate the nature of moderation, the interaction plot was graphed, indicating that perceived supervisory support had an enhancing effect on the relationship between future work self and proactivity. Figure 3 implies that as individuals' perceived supervisory support increased, the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviours became stronger, supporting Hypothesis 3.

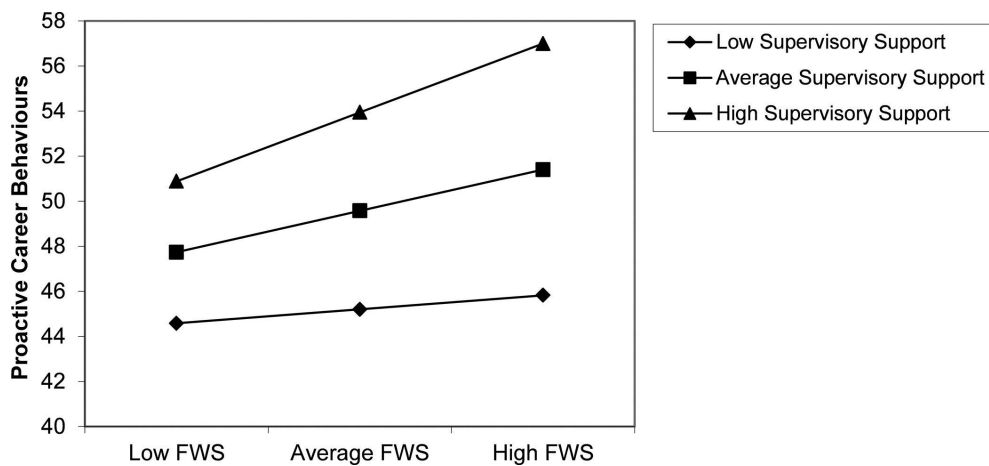


Figure 3. Interaction between future work self salience (FWS) and perceived supervisory support in predicting proactive career behaviours.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

The current research confirmed that future work self had a motivating effect on proactive career behaviours for employed participants considering or experiencing a career transition. Individuals who found it easier to recall and who had a clearer image of their future work selves, reported higher levels of proactivity, in terms of career planning, skills development, consultation, and networking behaviours aimed at bringing their future work selves to life.

The study's findings contribute to the limited research examining the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviours, confirming Strauss et al. (2012), however, contradicting Straus and Parker (2018), in the sense that future work self did positively predict proactive career behaviours for this sample. The inconsistency could be due to Straus and Parker's research intervention coinciding a radical organisational change involving budget cuts. Consequently, instead of directing internal resources on their future

development, the employees may have been more motivated to preserve status quo, contradicting the very aim of the vision intervention of changing a current work self so as to achieve the desired one.

Furthermore, this research addresses previous samples' uniformity by confirming the positive relationship between future vision and proactivity amongst multinational, employed populations, unlike previous studies which mainly involved homogenous, student samples.

The findings also bridge the research gap by providing new insights into the conditions under which the relationship between future work self and proactive career behaviours becomes enhanced. Individuals actively involved in career transition, who reported higher levels of psychological resources (readiness, confidence, internal locus of control, social support, and decision independence), showed a stronger motivating effect of future self on proactivity compared to individuals with average or lower resources. This aligns with previous predictions in career development (Fernandez et al., 2008; Heppner et al., 1994; Heppner, 1998; Sullivan, 1999), suggesting that certain psychological factors significantly influence the direction of a career transition and facilitate regulation of behaviours that help one cope with transition demands.

Participants who observed higher supervisory support reported more effectiveness in translating their future work vision into proactive career behaviours, compared to those with average or lower support. Conversely, for participants receiving lower support from their supervisors, future work vision made little difference on proactive career behaviours. In line with current findings, previous research (i.e., DeConinck & Johnson, 2009; Lord et al., 2010; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006) ascertained a positive impact of higher levels of supervisory performance feedback, mentoring, and career guidance on various career outcomes. Furthermore, Zhang et al. (2014) reported a similar finding, suggesting that low supervisory support weakened the relationship between future work self and proactive adjustment

behaviour. These observations reemphasise the role that positive supervisory support plays in employees' career growth.

The insights drawn from this study contribute to career development literature by highlighting that both individual and external factors embodied through psychological resources for career transition and supervisory support played a significant role in bringing a more fully realised future work self to life. Participants' regulation of their proactive career behaviours was motivated by inner resources as well as supportive environment. The positive effect of this interactionistic perspective (Magnusson, 2001) on career transition has been underscored from Super's theory of career development (1992) to contemporary career theories, such as contextual action theory (Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002), career construction theory (Savickas, 2005), systems theory framework (Patton & McMahon, 2006), chaos theory of careers (Bright & Pryor, 2011), and relational theory of working (Blustein, 2011).

Finally, the paper also responds to calls from Coaching profession for a more theory-driven practice. Relying on career development and career counselling theories, these findings contribute to enhancing Career Coaching field by providing practitioners with a theoretical model that could be used during career-oriented coaching conversations (see *Figure 4*).

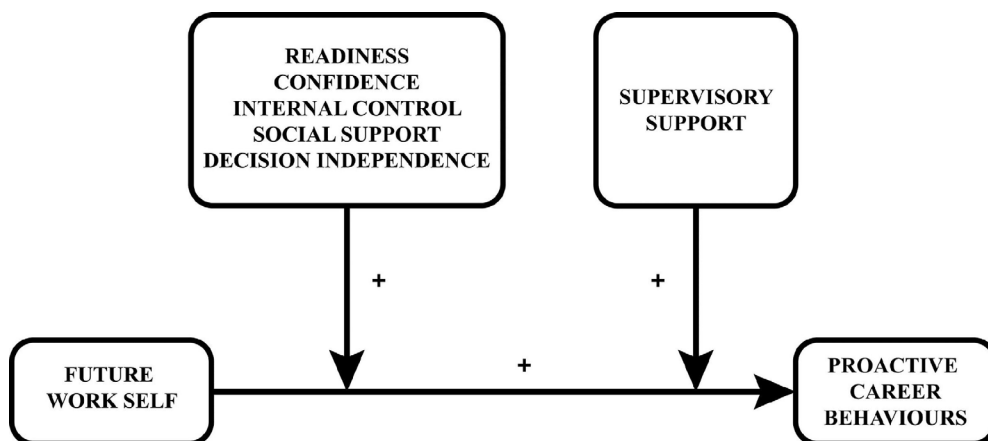


Figure 4. Outcome model.

Practical Implications

The current research acknowledges the importance of numerous factors influencing career development. Thus, Career Coaching practitioners can consolidate their practice by understanding the interplay between internal and external elements shaping one's career transition, especially during the 'case conceptualisation' stage of coaching so as to form a comprehensive image and develop adequate, client-congruent techniques to encourage a successful change. Attending to the working alliance in the initial coaching session could prove to be effective, based on its validated application in Career Counselling (Stauffer, Perdrix, Masdonati, Massoudi, and Rossier, 2013). Agreeing on goals and tasks linked to fulfilment of a desired future work self may enhance coachees' engagement and result in successful career outcomes.

Similarly, raising a coachee's awareness of their internal experience of the transition through the lens of their future work self, psychological resources, supervisory support, and proactive career behaviours might turn a coaching session into an individual reflective space, enabling a 'holding environment', which is deemed essential throughout the change process (Ibarra, 2003b).

Furthermore, during the assessment stage, Career Coaching practitioners may also draw a great deal of information on coachees' psychological resources using the Career transition inventory, particularly, the elements which impede a successful transition and design customised interventions to enhance individuals' resources, considering the malleability of these factors, argued by Heppner et al. (1994). The efficient use of the inventory in career counselling is already confirmed and elaborated thoroughly by Gysbers, Heppner, and Johnson (2003).

Correspondingly, Career Coaching practitioners may consider devising career

development initiatives based on future work selves, knowing the motivational impact and previously confirmed effectiveness in similar endeavours (i.e., Archer & Yates, 2017; Spurk, Kauffeld, Barthauer, & Heinemann, 2015).

For instance, Career Coaches can refer to Parker and colleagues' (2010) tested model, enlisting four different stages of turning a future work vision into specific, career development behaviours. In the envisioning stage, coaches encourage reflection on the desired vision and its difference to the status quo. During the planning phase, coachees are supported in mentally envisioning various possibilities of how to bring the vision to life. In the enacting phase, the desired future work self is realised through chosen proactive behaviours. Finally, the reflecting stage involves learning through contemplation on the whole process, which informs future actions.

Finally, this study's research findings confirm supervisory support added value for the sample that reported a more fully realised future work self through proactive career behaviours, contradicting some researchers' claims (i.e., Hall, 2004; De Vos & Dries, 2013) that individuals nowadays engage in self-guided career development without relying considerably on external support. Thus, organisations may consider upskilling supervisors by raising awareness of the role they play in subordinates' career growth. The initiatives could include coaching interventions, availing tools and techniques on how line managers could support their employees and contribute to the fulfilment of desired future work self. This could especially be implemented if the change is institutionalised and if an employee's future work self is aligned with company's goals and visions, also known as collective future work selves. The initiatives would be in accord with calls for more organisational guidelines, coaching interventions, and specific strategies concerning career development due to the observed increase in line management involvement in employee career growth (i.e., Segers & Inceoglu, 2012; De Vos & Cambré, 2017).

Limitations

Despite the highlighted theoretical and practical implications, this study is not short of limitations. The study only explored cross-sectional data, limiting conclusions to a career transition stage, depriving the reader of career outcome insights. Future research would add value if it implemented a longitudinal study design.

Additionally, controlling for more variables such as whether a transition is institutionalised or non-institutionalised, voluntary or involuntary, individual or collective would bring more depth to the findings.

The mentioned framework could be a useful theory-based tool for Career Coaching practitioners. However, the framework does not encompass all possible factors that could be influencing a successful career change and it rests with a practitioner to decide its suitable fit for a particular client.

Finally, the proposed model remains at the hypothetical level and has yet to be examined by future research.

Conclusion

The research findings confirm that clarity of future work self vision serves as an internal compass and encourages proactivity in career development for employed individuals considering or experiencing a career transition. Under the right conditions, such as having adequate psychological resources to cope with transition requirements and having supportive leadership, the effect that a future work self vision has on proactive career behaviours becomes even stronger.

In the increasingly uncertain and fast-changing landscape of work, Career Coaches can play a vital role in supporting their clients throughout a career transition. The current

research proposes a holistic framework, underscoring both individual and contextual factors shaping one's successful career transition which could be a useful diagnostic and interventional tool during career coaching conversations with employed clients.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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