

Combining economic and psychological predictors of career success

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Interest in career success

Economists versus psychologists

- Economists' interest in career success
 - Objective career success
 - E.g. wage, wage growth
 - Objectively observable antecedents
 - E.g. educational attainment, tenure, career breaks
- Psychologists' interest in career success
 - Both objective and subjective career success
 - E.g. job satisfaction, career satisfaction
 - More subjective, internal antecedents
 - E.g. dispositional traits, self-efficacy, work centrality

Combining economists' and psychologists' views

- Both research streams start to approach each other
 - Economists include personality traits in wage regressions
 - E.g. Groves, 2005; Nyhus & Pons, 2005
 - Psychologists pay more attention to career path characteristics
 - Under influence of new career theories, e.g. boundaryless career theories
 - E.g. Reitzle et al., 2009; Valcour & Ladge, 2008
- Increase in explained variance by combining both groups of antecedents is limited

Research aim

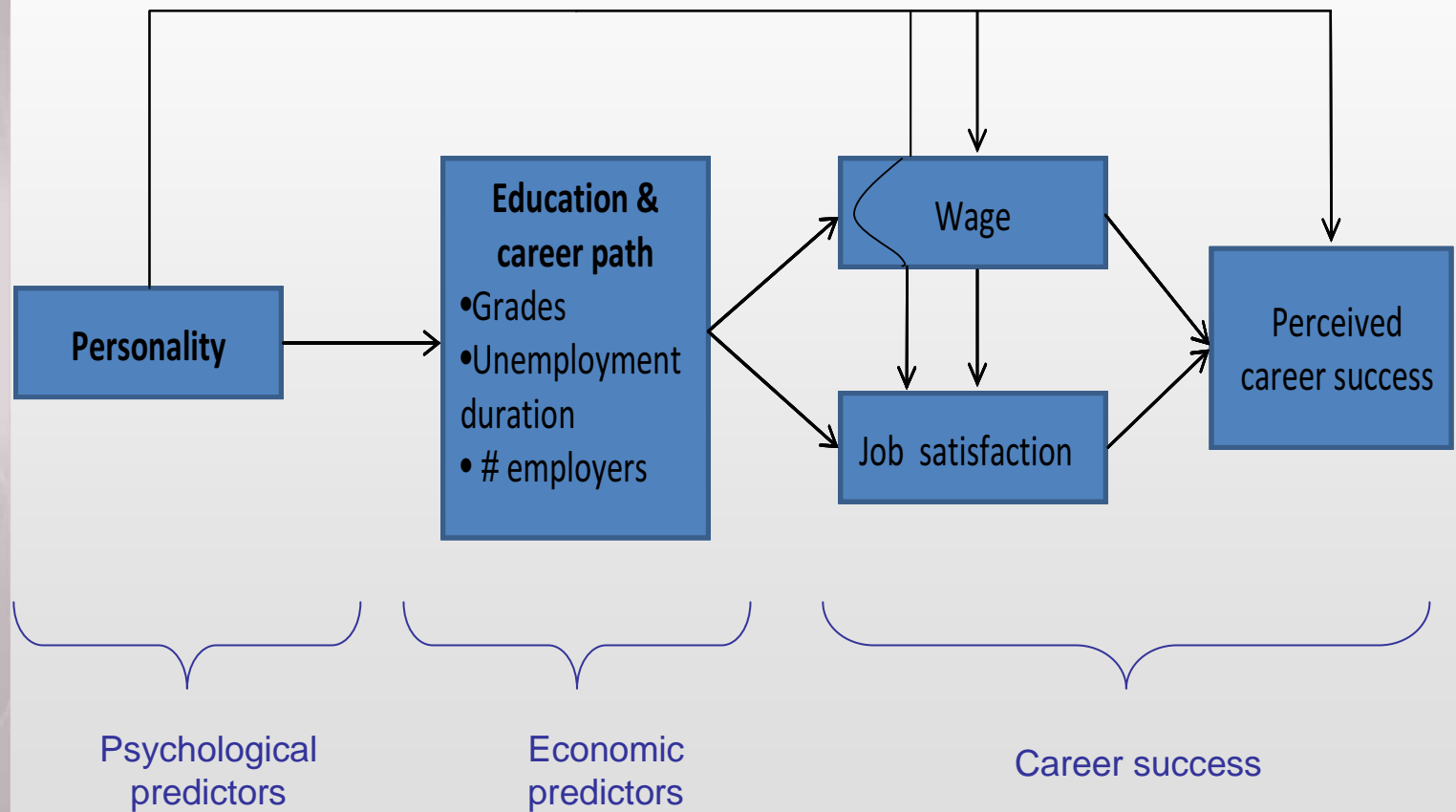
- **Main aim**

- Examining whether the low increase in explained variance can be explained by the fact that the impact of personality traits on career success is mediated by human capital and career path variables

- **Method**

- Testing an integrative model of career success which takes into account the relationship between personality traits and career path characteristics

Research model



Methodology

Procedure and analysis

- Procedure
 - Data collected in January 2008
 - Internet survey
 - Sample of 772 economic and business alumni
 - Alumni of the largest university in Belgium
 - Graduated between 1997 and 2006
 - Of whom we had the e-mail address
- Analysis
 - Structural Equation Analysis
 - SAS, Calis Procedure

Methodology

Measures

- **Personality**
 - The Big Five Bipolar Rating Scales (B5BBS-25 – Mervielde, 1992)
 - Extraversion ($\alpha=.75$), Emotional Stability ($\alpha=.81$), Conscientiousness ($\alpha=.78$)
- **Career path characteristics**
 - Grades
 - Months of unemployment since graduation
 - Number of employers per year
- **Career Success**
 - Logarithm of the net hourly wage
 - Job satisfaction: 1 item on a 7-point Likert scale (Janssen et al., 2003)
 - Perceived career success: 1 item on a 7-point Likert scale (Heslin, 2003)

Results (1)

- Good fit between the model and the data
 - $\chi^2[3] = 5.61$, $p = .13$; GFI = 1.00; AGFI = 0.96; CFI = 1.00; NFI = 0.99; NNFI = 0.92
- Career path characteristics

	Grades	Unemployment duration	Number of employers
Woman	.06	-.06	.10*
Extraversion	-.00	-.08*	-.03
Emotional Stability	-.12**	-.02	-.05
Conscientiousness	.16**	.01	-.16**
R ²	5%	1%	5%

Results (2)

- Career success

	Wage	Job satisfaction	Career satisfaction
Woman	-.08*	.01	-.04
Work experience	.62**	-.09	-.10*
Extraversion	.08*	.16**	.12*
Emotional Stability	.01	.16**	.09*
Conscientiousness	.02	.07	.02
Grades	.08*	.09*	-
Unemployment duration	-.10*	.01	-
Number of employers	.09*	.09*	-
Log. hourly wage	-	.24**	.20**
Job satisfaction	-	-	.41**
R ²	41%	12%	29%

Conclusion (1)

- The impact of personality traits on career success is partially mediated by career path characteristics
 - Only limited R^2 !
 - Other variables (e.g. agency, labor market characteristics) are likely to have a stronger impact

Conclusion (2)

- The mediating effect did not explain the limited increase in explained variance realised by combining both groups of variables
 - Only for subjective career success, the impact of personality traits is reduced by the adding career path characteristics
 - For job satisfaction, the impact of personality traits increased when career path characteristics were added

Conclusion (3)

- Career success
 - Objective -> Subjective
 - Current situation -> Overall evaluation of the career
 - The impact of career path characteristics on subjective career success seems to be fully mediated by wage and job satisfaction

Future research

- Similar findings for mid- and late career?
- Significance of early career success?
- Career success => Personality?
- Combining different research streams seems worthwhile - Career researchers may seek rapprochement with other streams

Limitations

- Business alumni
 - Specific profile => limited variation in personality traits
 - But: educational field has strong impact on wages (Napati, 2008)
- Cross-sectional research
- Self-report measures

Questions? Suggestions?