# Bridging Passion and Purpose: Proactive Career Behavior as the Mediator of Affective Commitment and Subjective Career Success

## *Menjembatani Minat dan Tujuan: Perilaku Karier Proaktif sebagai Mediator Komitmen Afektif dan Kesuksesan Karier Subjektif*

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### *Abstrak*

*Studi ini meneliti hubungan antara komitmen afektif (AC) dan kesuksesan karier subjektif (SCS), dengan perilaku karier proaktif (PCB) sebagai variabel mediasi. Penelitian ini berfokus pada guru Sekolah Luar Biasa (SLB) di Wilayah 6 Kantor Cabang Dinas (KCD 6) Jawa Barat, Indonesia. Sebanyak 77 responden berpartisipasi dalam studi cross-sectional ini, yang dilakukan dari 28 November hingga 14 Desember 2024. Jangka waktu yang singkat mengharuskan desain cross-sectional dipilih daripada pendekatan longitudinal.*
*Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan dianalisis menggunakan partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa AC tidak memiliki efek langsung pada SCS (p > 0,05), yang mengarah pada penolakan satu hipotesis. Namun, ketika PCB diperkenalkan sebagai mediator, hubungan tersebut menjadi signifikan secara statistik (p < 0,05), yang mengonfirmasi peran mediasi penuh PCB. Sejauh pengetahuan kami, ini adalah studi pertama yang menyelidiki ketiga konstruk ini secara khusus di antara guru pendidikan khusus.*
*Temuan ini memiliki implikasi praktis yang penting. Lembaga pendidikan dapat meningkatkan keberhasilan karier guru dengan mendorong PCB melalui intervensi yang terarah, seperti program bimbingan untuk berbagi pengetahuan, lokakarya pengembangan profesional, dan peluang jaringan terstruktur. Strategi semacam itu pada akhirnya dapat meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan dan memberi manfaat bagi siswa dan masyarakat.*

***Kata Kunci****: kesuksesan karier subjektif, komitmen afektif, perilaku karier proaktif, guru Sekolah Luar Biasa (SLB).*

### Abstract

This study examines the relationship between affective commitment (AC) and subjective career success (SCS), with proactive career behavior (PCB) as a mediating variable. The research focuses on special education teachers (SETs) in Region 6 (KCD 6) of West Java, Indonesia. A sample of 77 respondents participated in this cross-sectional study, conducted from November 28 to December 14, 2024. The short timeframe necessitated a cross-sectional design rather than a longitudinal approach.
Data were collected via questionnaires and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Results indicate that AC has no direct effect

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on SCS (p > 0.05), leading to the rejection of one hypothesis. However, when PCB is introduced as a mediator, the relationship becomes statistically significant (p < 0.05), confirming PCB's full mediating role. To our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate these three constructs specifically among special education teachers.

The findings have important practical implications. Educational institutions can enhance teachers' career success by fostering PCB through targeted interventions. These include mentorship programs for knowledge sharing, professional development workshops, and structured networking opportunities. Such strategies may ultimately improve education quality and benefit students and communities.

**Keywords:** subjective career success, affective commitment, proactive career behavior, special education teachers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers bear the responsibility of not only instructing but also mentoring students across different levels of education. The commitment required for this role extends beyond just skill; it demands a combination of passion, dedication, and a strong sense of purpose. The effectiveness of teaching, which significantly impacts the overall educational process, largely depends on the teachers' efforts. Research by Lobene & Meade (2013) emphasizes that the quality of instruction and education is fundamentally reliant on the capability of teachers to engage and inspire their students. Moreover, the productivity of teachers directly affects the broader educational environment, underscoring the necessity for well-supported and effective teaching personnel.

Greenhaus et al. (1990) posited that the notion of career success is fundamentally a personal assessment, influenced by individuals' perceptions of their overarching career goals, financial ambitions, and trajectories of professional growth. Employees with elevated career satisfaction levels typically exhibit greater engagement with their organization and make greater contributions to its growth. Previous studies indicate that career satisfaction is associated with favorable employee outcomes, including increased commitment and retention (Schooreel et al., 2017; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). As Choi & Moon (2016) note, this perceived success is not just a reflection of tangible career milestones but also relates to the emotional and psychological fulfillment that teachers derive from their work. Subjective career success can also play a protective role against stress, particularly for teachers in demanding environments like special education. According to Saks (2006), a high sense of personal achievement can alleviate the stress that many teachers face, leading to better psychological well-being. Conversely, teachers who feel unsuccessful in their careers may experience a decline in motivation and performance, which negatively impacts their students educational experiences (Hakanen et al., 2006).

Special education teachers play an important role in developing basic life skills for children with special needs. This task requires high dedication, a deep understanding of students, as well as patience and good physical and mental condition. In addition to mastering knowledge and skills based on student potential, special education teachers must also function as therapists, social workers, paramedics, and administrators (Haikal & Husniati, 2022). Teachers working with students with special needs face higher stress levels and burnout rates compared to their colleagues in general education (Amitai & Van Houtte, 2022). Factors such as overwhelming workloads, emotional pressures, and lack of support from school administrators exacerbate these challenges (Cui et al., 2022). In the US, these factors contribute to high attrition rates in special education, with an annual turnover rate of 13%, double that of general educators, and the three-year attrition rate of about 25% (Wong et al., 2017). Moreover, research by Naghibzadeh and Amiri (2014) found that the turnover

rate for special needs teachers is significantly higher than for regular teachers, with special school (SLB) teachers making up 70% of the attrition compared to 10% for regular teachers. This high turnover rate reflects the profound impact that challenges have on special education teachers' perceptions of success and their long-term career sustainability. As a result, fostering a strong sense of agency and emotional commitment is crucial for mitigating these difficulties. By developing a robust sense of emotional engagement and commitment, special education teachers can better cope with the challenges they encounter, thus improving their professional trajectories.

Affective commitment is distinguished by a profound affective connection to a profession or institution in which an individual is employed (Meyer & Allen, 1991). For special education teachers, who often deal with resource constraints and a diverse range of student needs (Wang & Liu, 2017), the elevated degree of affective commitment, the greater the likelihood these teachers are to experience job satisfaction and career success (Hakanen et al., 2006; Judge & Watanabe, 1993). This commitment drives teachers to proactively address challenges and to continuously strive for personal and professional growth, even when faced with significant obstacles. Teachers who experience a profound emotional bond to their profession exhibit a greater tendency to collaborate with peers and seek professional development opportunities, enhancing both their effectiveness and job satisfaction (Peláez-Fernández et al., 2021). Special education teachers exhibiting a strong affective commitment to their profession often experience a deeper emotional bond with their students and the tasks they undertake. This connection enhances their sense of fulfillment and achievement within their careers (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Such affective commitment serves as a catalyst, inspiring teachers to devote themselves more fully to delivering optimal educational support to students with special needs.

Moreover, affective commitment alone does not guarantee subjective career success. Research indicates that proactive career behaviors are also key determinants in achieving career success (Agrawal & Pradhan, 2024; Ekmekcioglu et al., 2020; Tims et al., 2013). Proactive career behavior includes actions such as pursuing professional development, honing teaching skills, navigating challenges within the workplace, taking initiative in their professional lives, and adapting to workplace changes (Crant, 2000; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). Teachers who possess a robust sense of affective commitment have an increased propensity to engage in these proactive behaviors, which consequently enhances their career success and job satisfaction.

As Tims et al. (2013) point out, the proactive stance taken by teachers is often influenced by their emotional attachment to their work. Teachers who feel a deep connection to their profession exhibit a greater propensity for initiative actively, seek professional development opportunities, and participate in activities that can help address challenges within the classroom. Consequently, proactive career behavior can function as a mediator, explaining why high affective commitment can lead to subjective career success. Teachers with strong affective commitment must adopt a more proactive approach to managing their careers, which ultimately increases their perception of their career success, in regards to contentment with their work, personal achievement, and emotional and mental health.

Research regarding the correlation between affective commitment and career success, particularly in the context of education, has not delve into the potential mediating role of proactive career behaviors within this relationship, especially concerning special education teachers. While research has examined career success in general education settings, special education teachers often encounter unique difficulties that can shape their interpretations of professional achievement, such as inadequate resources, high emotional demand, and addressing the varied requirements of kids with exceptional needs (Singh, 2023; Yusof & Abdullah, 2020). This gap leaves a lack of understanding about how these educators

perceive and achieve career success, and whether proactive strategies can enhance their professional growth despite these obstacles.

This study aims to bridge the gap by investigating how affective commitment and proactive career behaviors influence the subjective career success of special education teachers. Unlike general educators, special education teachers operate in a distinct environment with specific stressors and rewards. The research seeks to identify the key factors that shape their career progression, focusing on their emotional dedication to their profession and their willingness to take initiative in advancing their careers. By doing so, the study provides a deeper understanding of what drives career success and achievement in this critical yet often overlooked teaching sector.

The findings of this study could have significant practical implications. By uncovering how affective commitment and proactive behaviors contribute to subjective career success, the research can help schools and policymakers in developing targeted support systems for special education teachers. This may include mentorship programs, tailored professional development, and better resource allocation to enhance job satisfaction and retention. Ultimately, supporting these educators more effectively can lead to improved teaching quality, better student outcomes, and a more sustainable special education system. The study not only contributes to academic knowledge but also promotes a more inclusive and supportive educational environment where special education teachers feel valued and empowered in their careers.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Subjective career success—defined as an individual's personal evaluation of their career achievements, satisfaction, and growth—is crucial for teachers, particularly in special education, where emotional and professional demands are high. Unlike objective measures (e.g., promotions or salary), subjective success reflects intrinsic fulfillment, motivation, and a sense of purpose (Shockley et al., 2016). For teachers, this translates into job satisfaction, resilience, and long-term retention, which are essential for maintaining a stable and effective educational workforce (Ng & Feldman, 2014). Affective commitment—the emotional bond to one's organization (P. Chen, 2019; Guohao et al., 2021)— serves as a foundational driver of this success, fostering resilience and dedication even in challenging environments (Meyer & Allen, 1997)**.** Research conducted by Semlali & Elrayah (2022) underscores an association between an affective commitment and subjective career success, stressing the necessity of cultivating affective commitment to improve leaders' perceptions of their professional accomplishments. Emotionally committed educators report greater fulfillment and motivation, which enhances their sense of accomplishment (Ingarianti et al., 2022). However, this relationship may not be direct; proactive career behaviors, such as career planning, skill development and networking (H. Chen et al., 2023), likely mediate it. For instance, teachers with strong affective commitment are more inclined to take initiative in their careers (Guohao et al., 2021), suggesting that emotional attachment fuels behaviors that drive success (Ben Ayed et al., 2024). Another research indicates that supportive workplace environments, particularly those marked by family-supportive supervisory practices, can strengthen employees' affective commitment, thus encouraging proactive behaviors (P. Chen, 2019; Fan et al., 2023). This relationship implies that organizations that promote a supportive culture can develop a workforce that is not only dedicated but also actively seeks out opportunities for career advancement.

Proactive career behaviors including networking, skill enhancement, and career planning, are critical. They help translate commitment into tangible outcomes. Studies show that educators who actively shape their roles experience higher job satisfaction and resilience (Akkermans & Tims, 2017; Park et al., 2022). These behaviors align with the protean career mindset, where self-direction and adaptability improve employability and subjective career success (Ma et al., 2024; Nalis et al., 2022). Career construction theory further supports this notion, emphasizing that proactive actions help individuals to navigate challenges and thrive (Chang et al., 2023). This connection is reinforced by the idea that workers who actively manage their careers are more likely to experience job satisfaction and loyalty to their organizations, as they perceive their contributions as valued and acknowledged (P. Chen, 2019; Kundi et al., 2021). Research conducted by Park highlight that subjective career success encompasses not only psychological well-being but also correlates with work-related inspiration and productivity, suggesting that proactive behaviors can lead to significant enhancements in career outcomes (Park, 2010). However, the role of contextual factors—such as social support and institutional resources—is often overlooked. For example, mentorship programs can amplify proactive behaviors by providing guidance and reinforcing affective commitment (Cowan et al., 2016; Fan et al., 2023), highlighting the need for supportive environments.

Despite these insights, gaps persist in understanding how these dynamics apply to special education teachers. While affective commitment and proactive behaviors are well-studied in general contexts, their intersection in special education remains unclear. For instance, Najam et al. (2020) found that while organizations have the capacity to bolster employee commitment, organizational support alone does not guarantee career success, implying that individual agency—through proactive behaviors—is equally vital. Addressing these gaps could reveal tailored strategies to retain and empower special education teachers. Supporting this perspective, Ekmekcioglu et al. (2020) demonstrate that strategies aimed at career advancement can significantly influence the correlation between career commitment and perceived career success, so highlighting the importance of proactive career management. By equipping educators with essential support and resources, educational institutions can facilitate their adaptation to the complexities of their roles, thereby fostering their affective commitment and promoting proactive career behaviors (Cowan et al., 2016). This approach can ultimately contribute to improved subjective career success and a more stable workforce within special education environments.

In summary, affective commitment fosters proactive career behaviors, which in turn enhance subjective career success, but this pathway is shaped by organizational and individual factors. Special education teachers may benefit from interventions that strengthen emotional bonds to their work while encouraging proactive skill-building and networking. By bridging these gaps, this study examines two essential components of subjective professional success; affective commitment and proactive career behavior, along with the corresponding hypotheses:

H1: Affective commitment positively and significantly influences teachers' subjective career success.

H2: Affective commitment exerts a positive and considerable influence on proactive career behavior.

H3: Proactive career behavior has a positive and significant influence on teachers' subjective career success

H4: Proactive career behavior positively and significantly affects the correlation between affective commitment and teachers' subjective career success.

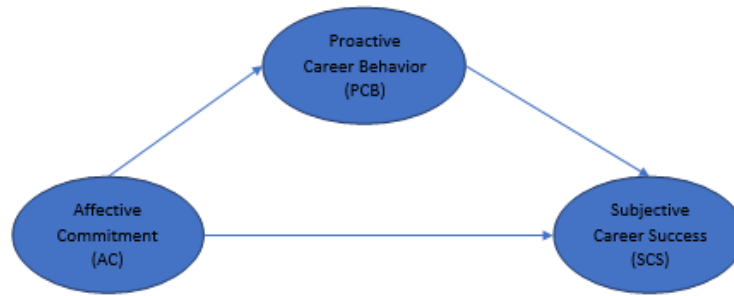The theoretical framework of this research is as follows Figure 1:



Figure 1. Research Framework
*Source: Processed by Researcher, 2025.*

## 3. RESEARCH METHOD

The current research was conducted by distributing of questionnaires to special school teachers working in the West Java Region 6 (KCD 6) area. Based on DAPODIK data, there are 178 special school teachers in KCD 6. The Slovin formula was utilized to ascertain the sample size with a 10% margin of error. The findings of the analysis suggested that the minimum sample size was 64 people. The process of distributing the questionnaire began with obtaining permission from the head of KCD 6. Furthermore, the questionnaire was distributed via the WhatsApp group by the KCD 6 administrators which were then filled in by representatives of each school. The research data analyzed were 77 data.

A quantitative approach is the research methodology utilized in this study. Because the duration allocated for executing this research was from 28 November – 14 December 2024 which is less than a year, the employed methodology was the cross-sectional method. The cross-sectional method is a research method where data were collected only once in one period (daily, weekly, or monthly) to answer the research question (Sekaran, 2016).

This research used a validated scale to measure the study variables. All questionnaire items were translated into Indonesian. Affective commitment was assessed using a five-point scale established by Clugston et al. (2000). An illustration of an object from this scale is: "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization." Respondents rated their accordance with the items on a five-point scale, where 1 signifies strong disagreement and 5 denotes strong agreement.

Proactive career behavior was assessed through a set of thirteen items that encompassed aspects such as career planning, proactive competencies enhancement, career counseling, and networking development, as initially devised by Strauss et al. (2012). One exemplary item is 'I engage in career path planning. Participants assessed their level of agreement with the statements on a five-point scale, with 1 signifying significant disagreement and 5 denoting strong agreement.

Subjective career success is quantified by the SCSI scale created by Shockley et al. (2016). The five-point scale contains 24 question items that cover several aspects, namely recognition, quality work, meaningful work, influence, authenticity, personal life, growth and development and satisfaction. The stem of every item is "Considering my career as a whole.." An example of the question is "... I am proud of the quality of the work I have produced"

After collecting questionnaire data from respondents, the researcher analyzed the effect of teachers' affective commitment and the mediating effect of proactive career

behavior on subjective career success using SEM-PLS. PLS Analysis is a multivariate statistic technique that makes comparison between multiple dependent variables and multiple independent variables (Abdillah & Hartono, 2015). The data analysis was conducted in two phases: first, the assessment of the Outer Model, followed by the examination of the Inner Model. The assessment of the outer model entails evaluating the construct validity and reliability of the research instrument. Construct validity encompasses the loading factor, whereas reliability is evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability.

## 4.  RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1  Respondent Characteristic

Table 1. Respondents' Characteristic

| Characteristic | | Total | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 17 | 22,08% |
| | Female | 60 | 77,92% |
| Age | ≤ 25 y.o | 6 | 7,8% |
| | 26-30 y.o | 16 | 20,8% |
| | 31-35 y.o | 14 | 18,2% |
| | 36-40 y.o | 5 | 6,5% |
| | 41-45 y.o | 12 | 15,6% |
| | 46-50 y.o | 6 | 7,8% |
| | ≥ 51 y.o | 18 | 23,3% |
| Tenure (Years) | ≤ 5 | 18 | 23,3% |
| | 6-10 | 8 | 10,4% |
| | 11-15 | 10 | 13,0% |
| | 16-20 | 20 | 26,0% |
| | 21-25 | 11 | 14,3% |
| | ≥ 25 | 10 | 13,0% |
| Employment Status | Civil Servant | 31 | 40,2% |
| | Government Contract | 5 | 6,5% |
| | Honorary | 26 | 33,8% |
| | Private Employee | 15 | 19,5% |

*Source: Processed by Researcher, 2025.*

Table 1 provides notable information, i.e. a significant portion of the respondents identifies as female, indicating possible gender trends within the teaching field, especially in special education institutions. The age demographics reveal that the predominant age category consists of individuals over 51 years, accounting for almost 25% of the participants. Additionally, more than 25% of the respondents have between 16 to 20 years of teaching experience, highlighting a considerable number of seasoned educators. Conversely, a smaller segment (23.3%) possesses less than 5 years of experience. Among the respondents, civil servants represent the largest demographic at 40.2%, with honorary employees closely following at 33.8%.

## 4.2 Outer Model Analysis

### 4.2.1 Validity

To ensure that the constructs in this study are accurately measured, we began by evaluating *convergent validity*—a test of whether indicators that are supposed to reflect the same underlying concept actually do so. A widely accepted benchmark here is the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), as show in Table 2: a minimum value of 0.5 is required, indicating that a latent variable explains over 50% of the variance in its indicators. In other words, more than half of what each indicator reflects must be meaningfully tied to the underlying construct it represents. The definitive relationship between the underlying variable and its corresponding indicator should exceed 0.70, which refers to the magnitude of the outer standard loadings, commonly known as outer loadings. In the initial analysis, some indicators fell short of this expectation, with outer loading values (the strength of the link between each item and its latent variable) dipping below the 0.70 threshold. These underperforming indicators were removed, as they could weaken the integrity of the model. However, after refining the model and re-running the analysis, all remaining indicators exceeded the 0.70 benchmark, and AVE values for each construct surpassed 0.5. This signals that the indicators are strongly interrelated and effectively capture the essence of the variables being measured—such as emotional dedication and career initiative.

These results are crucial in the context of this research, which aims to uncover what drives career progression among professionals in a critical yet often overlooked sector of education. The robust convergent validity confirms that the constructs are being accurately represented by their respective indicators, laying a reliable foundation for deeper analysis (Figure 2).
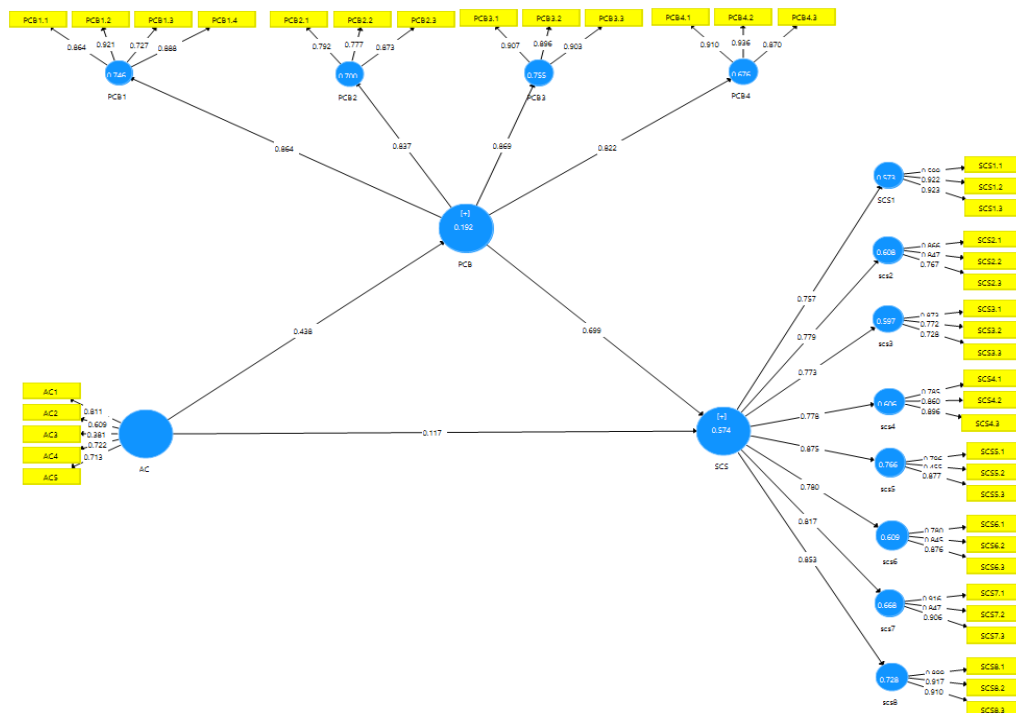


Figure 2. SEM Model (After second PLS Algorithm run)
*Source : Processed by Researcher, 2025.*

Table 2. AVE

| | AVE | | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|
| AC | 0.639 | SCS | 0.584 |
| PCB | 0.621 | SCS1 | 0.891 |
| PCB1 | 0.727 | SCS2 | 0.680 |
| PCB2 | 0.663 | SCS3 | 0.627 |
| PCB3 | 0.814 | SCS4 | 0.718 |
| PCB4 | 0.820 | SCS5 | 0.738 |
| | | SCS6 | 0.696 |
| | | SCS7 | 0.791 |
| | | SCS8 | 0.826 |

*Source : Processed by Researcher, 2025.*

Equally important is *discriminant validity*, which ensures that the concepts of study are truly distinct from one another. After all, if we are to understand the unique contributions of affective commitment versus proactive career behavior, the tools used to measure these ideas must not overlap. Using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading analysis in SMART-PLS, we found that each indicator loaded more strongly on its intended construct than on any other, with values consistently above 0.7. This clear separation confirms that the variables are conceptually and statistically distinct (Table 3).

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker (AVE Root)

| | AC | PCB | PCB1 | PCB2 | PCB3 | PCB4 | SCS | SCS1 | SCS2 | SCS3 | SCS4 | SCS5 | SCS6 | SCS7 | SCS8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AC | 0.799 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PCB | 0.432 | 0.788 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PCB1 | 0.321 | 0.856 | 0.853 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PCB2 | 0.271 | 0.794 | 0.700 | 0.815 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PCB3 | 0.409 | 0.885 | 0.616 | 0.675 | 0.902 | | | | | | | | | | |
| PCB4 | 0.378 | 0.820 | 0.580 | 0.542 | 0.660 | 0.905 | | | | | | | | | |
| SCS | 0.375 | 0.766 | 0.523 | 0.518 | 0.708 | 0.751 | 0.764 | | | | | | | | |
| SCS1 | 0.222 | 0.500 | 0.328 | 0.316 | 0.492 | 0.484 | 0.782 | 0.944 | | | | | | | |
| SCS2 | 0.110 | 0.516 | 0.343 | 0.459 | 0.506 | 0.469 | 0.735 | 0.675 | 0.825 | | | | | | |
| SCS3 | 0.247 | 0.545 | 0.425 | 0.447 | 0.418 | 0.573 | 0.728 | 0.573 | 0.621 | 0.792 | | | | | |
| SCS4 | 0.316 | 0.597 | 0.399 | 0.443 | 0.522 | 0.646 | 0.728 | 0.547 | 0.562 | 0.659 | 0.847 | | | | |
| SCS5 | 0.292 | 0.652 | 0.496 | 0.457 | 0.548 | 0.669 | 0.867 | 0.624 | 0.682 | 0.685 | 0.618 | 0.859 | | | |
| SCS6 | 0.389 | 0.640 | 0.427 | 0.375 | 0.626 | 0.644 | 0.782 | 0.501 | 0.451 | 0.480 | 0.567 | 0.655 | 0.834 | | |
| SCS7 | 0.392 | 0.741 | 0.584 | 0.553 | 0.653 | 0.635 | 0.837 | 0.592 | 0.548 | 0.519 | 0.509 | 0.708 | 0.585 | 0.890 | |
| SCS8 | 0.359 | 0.707 | 0.430 | 0.480 | 0.721 | 0.664 | 0.875 | 0.531 | 0.569 | 0.558 | 0.595 | 0.690 | 0.750 | 0.708 | 0.909 |

*Source: Processed by Researcher, 2025.*

The Table 4 below presents the cross-loading values for each indicator that measures a variable whose value is more than 0.7 and greater than other variables.

Table 4. Cross Loading

| | AC | PCB1 | PCB2 | PCB3 | PCB4 | SCS1 | SCS2 | SCS3 | SCS4 | SCS5 | SCS6 | SCS7 | SCS8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AC1 | 0.902 | 0.322 | 0.283 | 0.479 | 0.423 | 0.252 | 0.142 | 0.264 | 0.305 | 0.388 | 0.419 | 0.434 | 0.436 |
| AC4 | 0.752 | 0.248 | 0.148 | 0.196 | 0.151 | 0.177 | 0.057 | 0.112 | 0.150 | 0.067 | 0.204 | 0.235 | 0.118 |
| AC5 | 0.733 | 0.138 | 0.163 | 0.143 | 0.222 | 0.009 | -0.001 | 0.161 | 0.289 | 0.069 | 0.214 | 0.146 | 0.149 |
| PCB1.1 | 0.315 | 0.871 | 0.613 | 0.572 | 0.528 | 0.338 | 0.349 | 0.391 | 0.382 | 0.444 | 0.457 | 0.545 | 0.511 |
| PCB1.2 | 0.293 | 0.926 | 0.615 | 0.588 | 0.517 | 0.350 | 0.306 | 0.357 | 0.348 | 0.521 | 0.420 | 0.611 | 0.383 |
| PCB1.3 | 0.283 | 0.714 | 0.507 | 0.429 | 0.455 | 0.124 | 0.219 | 0.324 | 0.319 | 0.329 | 0.314 | 0.358 | 0.299 |
| PCB1.4 | 0.207 | 0.886 | 0.647 | 0.495 | 0.478 | 0.269 | 0.283 | 0.379 | 0.314 | 0.377 | 0.251 | 0.447 | 0.254 |
| PCB2.1 | 0.184 | 0.490 | 0.779 | 0.519 | 0.476 | 0.218 | 0.314 | 0.342 | 0.336 | 0.316 | 0.232 | 0.256 | 0.234 |
| PCB2.2 | 0.066 | 0.511 | 0.778 | 0.493 | 0.144 | 0.239 | 0.351 | 0.233 | 0.215 | 0.263 | 0.162 | 0.437 | 0.274 |
| PCB2.3 | 0.352 | 0.679 | 0.882 | 0.621 | 0.617 | 0.304 | 0.441 | 0.474 | 0.482 | 0.492 | 0.457 | 0.611 | 0.589 |
| PCB3.1 | 0.413 | 0.628 | 0.612 | 0.908 | 0.573 | 0.340 | 0.435 | 0.331 | 0.413 | 0.396 | 0.592 | 0.583 | 0.636 |
| PCB3.2 | 0.259 | 0.468 | 0.546 | 0.896 | 0.531 | 0.472 | 0.441 | 0.332 | 0.421 | 0.514 | 0.555 | 0.530 | 0.650 |
| PCB3.3 | 0.422 | 0.561 | 0.659 | 0.902 | 0.675 | 0.522 | 0.491 | 0.462 | 0.573 | 0.574 | 0.545 | 0.646 | 0.665 |
| PCB4.1 | 0.372 | 0.560 | 0.481 | 0.665 | 0.914 | 0.445 | 0.356 | 0.533 | 0.621 | 0.654 | 0.624 | 0.603 | 0.662 |
| PCB4.2 | 0.394 | 0.546 | 0.569 | 0.604 | 0.936 | 0.483 | 0.531 | 0.585 | 0.636 | 0.631 | 0.598 | 0.652 | 0.613 |
| PCB4.3 | 0.242 | 0.460 | 0.409 | 0.511 | 0.864 | 0.376 | 0.384 | 0.424 | 0.481 | 0.520 | 0.519 | 0.447 | 0.516 |
| SCS1.2 | 0.252 | 0.256 | 0.266 | 0.447 | 0.502 | 0.942 | 0.614 | 0.538 | 0.534 | 0.563 | 0.516 | 0.536 | 0.495 |
| SCS1.3 | 0.168 | 0.361 | 0.330 | 0.482 | 0.412 | 0.945 | 0.660 | 0.543 | 0.499 | 0.614 | 0.430 | 0.581 | 0.507 |
| SCS2.1 | 0.219 | 0.338 | 0.382 | 0.522 | 0.545 | 0.686 | 0.888 | 0.604 | 0.591 | 0.685 | 0.576 | 0.587 | 0.595 |
| SCS2.2 | -0.004 | 0.238 | 0.330 | 0.414 | 0.212 | 0.484 | 0.840 | 0.362 | 0.285 | 0.460 | 0.209 | 0.388 | 0.400 |
| SCS2.3 | -0.034 | 0.248 | 0.448 | 0.254 | 0.311 | 0.431 | 0.740 | 0.538 | 0.452 | 0.482 | 0.197 | 0.301 | 0.344 |
| SCS3.1 | 0.255 | 0.425 | 0.426 | 0.436 | 0.604 | 0.542 | 0.502 | 0.886 | 0.554 | 0.622 | 0.529 | 0.545 | 0.560 |
| SCS3.2 | 0.130 | 0.338 | 0.292 | 0.211 | 0.319 | 0.358 | 0.520 | 0.754 | 0.482 | 0.482 | 0.262 | 0.323 | 0.277 |
| SCS3.3 | 0.175 | 0.227 | 0.323 | 0.300 | 0.379 | 0.430 | 0.475 | 0.726 | 0.534 | 0.505 | 0.289 | 0.316 | 0.437 |
| SCS4.1 | 0.231 | 0.236 | 0.374 | 0.270 | 0.481 | 0.350 | 0.503 | 0.608 | 0.770 | 0.486 | 0.308 | 0.364 | 0.416 |
| SCS4.2 | 0.263 | 0.419 | 0.437 | 0.534 | 0.480 | 0.423 | 0.436 | 0.472 | 0.858 | 0.460 | 0.511 | 0.429 | 0.485 |
| SCS4.3 | 0.302 | 0.352 | 0.337 | 0.497 | 0.655 | 0.581 | 0.499 | 0.603 | 0.908 | 0.609 | 0.584 | 0.487 | 0.589 |
| SCS5.1 | 0.183 | 0.444 | 0.329 | 0.509 | 0.663 | 0.615 | 0.637 | 0.524 | 0.554 | 0.867 | 0.590 | 0.554 | 0.622 |
| SCS5.3 | 0.322 | 0.407 | 0.459 | 0.431 | 0.482 | 0.453 | 0.532 | 0.656 | 0.507 | 0.851 | 0.534 | 0.664 | 0.562 |
| SCS6.1 | 0.390 | 0.314 | 0.269 | 0.427 | 0.453 | 0.298 | 0.203 | 0.284 | 0.389 | 0.475 | 0.782 | 0.412 | 0.555 |
| SCS6.2 | 0.304 | 0.392 | 0.418 | 0.600 | 0.570 | 0.413 | 0.520 | 0.446 | 0.559 | 0.555 | 0.834 | 0.437 | 0.622 |
| SCS6.3 | 0.301 | 0.361 | 0.257 | 0.530 | 0.578 | 0.513 | 0.381 | 0.451 | 0.467 | 0.598 | 0.884 | 0.595 | 0.688 |
| SCS7.1 | 0.404 | 0.484 | 0.511 | 0.666 | 0.665 | 0.574 | 0.529 | 0.486 | 0.563 | 0.645 | 0.572 | 0.919 | 0.730 |
| SCS7.2 | 0.293 | 0.484 | 0.428 | 0.539 | 0.477 | 0.500 | 0.435 | 0.468 | 0.348 | 0.558 | 0.468 | 0.841 | 0.564 |
| SCS7.3 | 0.340 | 0.596 | 0.531 | 0.527 | 0.533 | 0.502 | 0.490 | 0.433 | 0.425 | 0.680 | 0.515 | 0.907 | 0.581 |
| SCS8.1 | 0.315 | 0.299 | 0.432 | 0.624 | 0.568 | 0.531 | 0.618 | 0.539 | 0.557 | 0.661 | 0.662 | 0.628 | 0.898 |
| SCS8.2 | 0.297 | 0.425 | 0.395 | 0.735 | 0.591 | 0.458 | 0.531 | 0.415 | 0.507 | 0.584 | 0.647 | 0.656 | 0.917 |
| SCS8.3 | 0.364 | 0.450 | 0.479 | 0.611 | 0.652 | 0.456 | 0.402 | 0.563 | 0.556 | 0.634 | 0.733 | 0.647 | 0.911 |

*Source: Processed by Researcher, 2025.*

Together, these findings strengthen the study's ability to provide valuable insights. They suggest that not only are we measuring what we intend to measure, but also that the dimensions of affective commitment and proactive career behavior are indeed separate forces shaping subjective career success among special education teachers' profession. This clarity helps us one step closer to understanding what truly drives professional growth in this vital field.

### 4.2.2 Reliability

Table 5 presents the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability for each indicator and variable. The Cronbach's alpha values surpass 0.6, while the composite reliability exceeds 0.7. Therefore, it can be assumed that the indicators used in this study are not just randomly aligned—they consistently capture the underlying qualities they're meant to measure. This lays a solid foundation for reliable analysis and lends credibility of our findings on the variables.

Table 5. Reliability Test

| Cronbach's Alpha | | | | Composite Reliability | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AC | 0.757 | SCS | 0.940 | AC | 0.840 | SCS | 0.948 |
| PCB | 0.923 | SCS1 | 0.877 | PCB | 0.936 | SCS1 | 0.942 |
| PCB1 | 0.872 | SCS2 | 0.775 | PCB1 | 0.914 | SCS2 | 0.864 |
| PCB2 | 0.750 | SCS3 | 0.705 | PCB2 | 0.855 | SCS3 | 0.834 |
| PCB3 | 0.886 | SCS4 | 0.804 | PCB3 | 0.929 | SCS4 | 0.884 |
| PCB4 | 0.890 | SCS5 | 0.645 | PCB4 | 0.932 | SCS5 | 0.849 |
| | | SCS6 | 0.783 | | | SCS6 | 0.873 |
| | | SCS7 | 0.868 | | | SCS7 | 0.919 |
| | | SCS8 | 0.895 | | | SCS8 | 0.934 |

*Source : Processed by Researcher, 2025.*

### 4.3 Inner Model Analysis

### 4.3.1 Direct, Indirect, Total Effect and F-Square

Table 6. Direct, Indirect and Total Effect

| | AC | PCB | SCS | Type of Effect |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| AC | | 0.432 | 0.055 | Direct Effect |
| PCB | | | 0.742 | |
| | AC | PCB | SCS | Indirect Effect |
| AC | | | 0.320 | |
| | AC | PCB | SCS | Total Effect |
| AC | | 0.432 | 0.375 | |
| PCB | | | 0.742 | |
| | AC | PCB | SCS | F-Square |
| AC | | 0.229 | 0.006 | |
| PCB | | | 1.088 | |

*Source: Processed by Researcher, 2025.*

Based on Table 6. the subsequent conclusions may be derived:

a. **Affective Commitment** (AC) → Proactive Career Behavior (PCB): The data shows a strong positive connection, with a coefficient of 0.432. In real terms, this means that when a teacher's affective commitment to their work increases by just one unit, their proactive career behavior rises by 43.2%. This isn't just a statistic—it reveals that passion for the profession fuels action. Teachers who care deeply are significantly more likely to

take steps to advance their careers, whether by seeking new challenges, setting clear goals, or investing in their development.

b. **Affective Commitment** (AC) → Subjective Career Success (SCS): The direct effect is positive but modest, with a coefficient of 0.055. A one-unit increase in affective commitment corresponds to a 5.5% increase in how teachers perceive their career success. While the effect is small, it's still meaningful—it suggests that simply feeling connected to one's profession can slightly elevate self-perception. However, on its own, affective commitment may not be enough to significantly shape career outcomes.

c. **Proactive Career Behavior** (PCB) → Subjective Career Success (SCS): This is where the most striking impact is seen. The relationship between PCB and SCS is strong and highly positive, with a coefficient of 0.742. Essentially, when teachers actively take charge of their professional growth, their sense of success increases by a remarkable 74.2%. This underscores a critical finding of the study: proactivity is the key driver of success.

The study dives deeper by examining indirect effects—those behind-the-scenes influences where one variable impacts another through an intermediary. Specifically, AC influences SCS through PCB, with an effect size of 0.320. It means, that when teachers are emotionally invested in their work, that commitment enhances their proactive career efforts, which in turn leading to a 32% increase in perceived career success. It suggests that emotional dedication fuels action, and those actions lead to meaningful progress in one's career.

When we look at the total effect—which includes both direct and indirect influences—the overall impact of AC on SCS stands at 0.375, or a 37.5% increase. This reaffirms the critical role of affective commitment, even when the direct effect may seem small; its true power is revealed through the actions it inspires.

After we found that there is indeed a relationship next step is to understand how strong that relationship is. Using effect size ($f^2$) as a lens, we see that the influence of AC on PCB is moderate at 0.229, confirming that affective commitment does indeed spark proactive career behavior. The influence of PCB on SCS is strong—an impressive 1.088—indicating that those who take charge of their careers experience far greater success. However, the direct effect of AC on SCS is minimal ($f^2 = 0.006$), highlighting the importance of action (PCB) as the bridge between dedication and success.

### 4.3.2 Goodness Fit Model Test

Turning to the R-squared ($R^2$) values, we gain insights into how much of the change in one variable can be explained by another. The $R^2$ for the influence of AC on PCB is 0.186, with an adjusted $R^2$ of 0.176—indicating a modest but meaningful impact. It tells us that around 17.6% of proactive career behaviors can be traced back to affective commitment.

More significantly, the combined influence of AC and PCB on SCS yields an $R^2$ of 0.588 and an adjusted $R^2$ of 0.577. This means that over 57% of the variation in subjective career success can be explained by these two factors together—a moderately strong effect that underscores the importance of both affective commitment and proactive career behavior.

**4.4 Hypothesis Testing**

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing

| | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics (|O/STDEV|) | P Values | Effect |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AC -> PCB** | 0.432 | 0.434 | 0.146 | 2.948 | **0.003** | **Direct Effect** |
| **AC -> SCS** | 0.055 | 0.053 | 0.101 | 0.544 | **0.587** | **Direct Effect** |
| **PCB -> SCS** | 0.742 | 0.724 | 0.079 | 9.447 | **0.000** | **Direct Effect** |
| **AC -> PCB -> SCS** | 0.320 | 0.317 | 0.118 | 2.707 | **0.007** | **Specific Indirect Effect** |
| **AC -> SCS** | 0.375 | 0.371 | 0.164 | 2.282 | **0.023** | **Total effect** |

*Source : Processed by Researcher, 2025.*

**Direct Relationship AC → SCS:** While the coefficient of 0.055 suggests a positive relationship between AC and SCS, the result is not statistically significant (p = 0.587), culminates in the dismissal of hypothesis H1. In other words, affective commitment alone doesn't directly drive subjective career success—it needs to be activated through action (PCB).

**Direct Relationship AC → PCB**: Here, we see a stronger and statistically significant relationship. The coefficient of 0.432 (p = 0.003), supports the acceptance of the hypothesis 2 (H2). The result shows that when teachers feel connected to their work, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that actively advance their careers.

**Direct Relationship PCB → SCS**: With a coefficient of 0.742 (p = 0.000), the relationship is not only strong but also highly significant. This corroborates the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H3). It's clear: those who take initiative—seeking opportunities, planning ahead, and embracing responsibility—are far more likely to perceive themselves as successful.

**Indirect Relationship AC → PCB → SCS**: This finding provides integrative insight into the indirect pathway linking AC and SCS through PCB. The indirect effect of AC on SCS via PCB is 0.320 (p = 0.007) resulting in the acceptance of hypothesis H4, affirming that proactive career behavior is the vital link between affective commitment and subjective career success. It's not enough to care deeply—those feelings must translate into deliberate, forward-moving action.

**4.5 Affective Commitment towards Subjective Career Success**

While the analysis confirms a correlation between affective commitment (AC) and subjective career success (SCS), the absence of statistical significance invites deeper reflection: Why does emotional investment in one's career not consistently translate into a sense of professional fulfillment? This finding aligns with Schultheiss et al. (2023), who observed only marginal moderating effects between job dedication and career success, suggesting that passion alone may not suffice. Poon's (2004) research further complicates the narrative, revealing a divergence between the drivers of objective achievements (e.g., promotions) and subjective perceptions of success. Yet, contrasting perspectives emerge— Swami et al. (2024) argue that in dynamic sectors like tourism, career commitment significantly enhances self-perceived success, while Ingarianti et al. (2022) demonstrate that individuals with high AC often experience greater authenticity and satisfaction.

Nevertheless, the absence of significant findings in the current study may suggest the influence of context-specific variables, such as institutional frameworks or individual career paths, which could obscure the quantifiable effect of affective commitment on subjective career success within this particular environment.

### 4.6 Affective Commitment towards Proactive Career Behavior

The data paints a compelling picture: employees who feel a strong emotional bond to their profession are not merely passive participants but active architects of their career trajectories. The moderate yet significant correlation between AC and proactive career behavior (PCB) reinforces prior insights (Gardner, 2010; Rose & Sughrue, 2020)—when individuals identify deeply with their work, they are more inclined to seek development opportunities, advocate for their growth, and contribute beyond formal role expectations. Consider, for instance, educators who pursue additional certifications or mentor peers, not out of obligation but driven by genuine engagement. Recent studies (Ben Ayed et al., 2024; Sridadi et al., 2024) extend this logic, showing that high AC fosters a mindset where employees take ownership of their professional journeys, benefiting both their personal advancement and organizational vitality. These findings challenge traditional assumptions: affective commitment is not just about retention—it is a dynamic force that propels individuals to act.

### 4.7 Proactive Career Behavior on Subjective Career Success

Proactive career behavior (PCB) emerges as a decisive factor in shaping how individuals perceive their professional achievements. This study reinforces the conclusions of Strauss et al. (2012) and Smale et al. (2019), those who actively seek feedback, expand their networks, and pursue skill-building opportunities report markedly higher career satisfaction. Lent et al. (2022) offer an even more nuanced perspective, in an era of unpredictable career landscapes, PCB equips professionals to navigate ambiguity and construct their pathways to success. The implications are profound, rather than waiting for opportunities, individuals who take initiative cultivate a stronger sense of agency, transforming potential obstacles into avenues for growth.

### 4.8 The Mediating Role of Proactive Career Behavior in the Relationship Between Affective Commitment and Subjective Career Success

The mediation analysis reveals a critical insight. While affective commitment (AC) alone does not directly enhance subjective career success (SCS), its true impact is realized when employees translate that commitment into proactive career behaviors (PCB). Initially, the direct effect of AC on SCS was negligible ($\beta = 0.055$, *p* = 0.587), but when accounting for PCB, the relationship becomes significant ($\beta = 0.320$, *p* = 0.007). This aligns with Ahmad et al. (2023) and Gurieva et al. (2023), who posit that AC's value lies in its ability to motivate employees to take charge of their career development. Similarly, Agrawal & Pradhan (2024) found that PCB mediates the influence of leadership on SCS, reinforcing the idea that action bridges intention and outcome. Affective commitment is not an endpoint—it is a psychological resource that, when coupled with proactive strategies, becomes a powerful driver of career fulfillment.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study breaks new ground by examining how affective commitment (AC) and proactive career behavior (PCB) collectively shape subjective career success *(SCS)* among special education teachers—a previously underexplored population in career development research. While prior studies have established AC as a driver of employee retention and PCB as a predictor of career advancement, our findings reveal a critical nuance: AC alone does not directly enhance SCS ($\beta$ = 0.055, p = 0.587), but its impact becomes significant when channeled through PCB ($\beta$ = 0.320, p = 0.007). This novel finding positions PCB not merely an innate trait but as a teachable skill set that transforms emotional engagement into tangible career fulfillment. This indicates that intrinsic motivation—driven by personal values and interests—and career-oriented actions, such as networking, skill acquisition, and continuous learning, are far more significant in determining an individual's career achievements than mere loyalty or allegiance to an organization. Teachers who demonstrate elevated levels of these proactive behaviors tend to view their careers as more satisfying and aligned with their goals.

To effectively promote proactive career behaviors, educational institutions should consider implementing a range of targeted initiatives. Schools and administrators enhance greater career satisfaction by implementing mentorship programs that facilitate knowledge sharing, offering targeted professional development workshops, and creating structured networking opportunities. Furthermore, organizing skills enhancement workshops can equip teachers with the latest pedagogical techniques and tools, enabling them to stay current in their field and improve their teaching effectiveness. Networking opportunities also play a vital role in empowering teachers to take charge of their careers. By connecting teachers with peers, industry experts, and educational leaders, institutions can help them build relationships that may lead to collaborative projects, job opportunities, and professional growth. This shift from a loyalty-based to a growth-oriented culture benefits not only individual teachers but also enhances the overall educational quality, creating positive ripple effects for students and communities.

Our research challenges conventional assumptions about workplace commitment by demonstrating that emotional attachment to an institution alone cannot guarantee career fulfillment. Instead, success emerges when teachers actively translate their commitment into professional behaviors that align with their personal values and goals. This is particularly relevant for special education professionals, whose work is often driven by deep personal mission. When schools empower these educators to act on their commitment through skill-building and collaborative opportunities, they unlock greater potential for both individual and organizational success.

The current research, although it provides important insights, is constrained by several limitations that future studies should consider. Primarily, the concentration on teachers from a particular area—Region 6 of West Java—restricts the applicability of the findings. Broadening the investigation to encompass a variety of regions could yield an expanded comprehension of Affective Commitment (AC) and Subjective Career Success (SCS).

While these findings offer valuable insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The study's regional focus on special education sector in West Java modest sample size (N = 77) may limit the statistical power of the research, thereby complicating the identification of subtle effects or intricacies within the data. Future investigations employing demonstrate that the direct impact of AC on SCS lacks statistical significance the robustness and applicability of the findings. Future research should expand to diverse geographic contexts and employ longitudinal designs to track these relationships over time.

Furthermore, the study's dependence on self-reported measures presents another limitation, as these can be susceptible to biases, including social desirability and response consistency. The integration of objective data or evaluations from third parties could help alleviate these biases and offer a more comprehensive assessment of the constructs being examined.

Moreover, it is imperative for researchers to delve deeper into additional mediators like psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, and opportunities for professional development that might further explain the AC-PCB-SCS pathway. Psychological empowerment, for instance, can improve a person's awareness of control and motivation, possibly enhancing the beneficial outcomes of PCB on SCS. Similarly, job satisfaction may serve as both a mediator and a moderator, influencing how proactive behaviors translate into perceived career success. Opportunities for professional development can also play a critical role, as they may provide the necessary resources and support for individuals to effectively engage in proactive behaviors.

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