



Understanding Singapore Health Professionals' Career Planning and Development Behaviours

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BACKGROUND

- Many health professionals lack resources to plan and develop their careers and explore potential paths within their profession
- This leads to a passive approach to developing one's career, resulting in:
 - Incompatibility between their jobs/careers, life aspirations, and needs
 - Low job/career satisfaction and engagement leading to greater desire to leave healthcare
- Better understanding of current Singapore health professionals' career planning and development behaviours can help contribute towards initiatives to improve proactivity in career management, leading to better career satisfaction and engagement (Enache et al., 2011, Seibert et al., 2001)

Aim: To explore Singapore health professionals' career planning and development behaviours

METHODS

Mixed methods approach to studying Singapore health professionals' career planning and development behaviours:

Quantitative Survey

- Responses from 145 health professionals
- Regression analyses and t-tests to identify:
 - Predictors of career outcomes
 - Gender differences

Qualitative Interviews

- Interviews with 20 nurses and 20 allied health professionals
- Thematic analyses to identify:
 - Career planning and development approaches
 - Resources & challenges in proactive career management

RESULTS

Quantitative Analyses

Career Outcomes Predictors

Work engagement predicted by:

- Proactive personality ($B = 0.78, p < .01$)
- Not having a mentor ($B = -3.44, p = .04$)
- Greater work support ($B = 0.24, p = .01$)
- Network-building ($B = 0.21, p = .03$)

Career satisfaction predicted by:

- Greater work support ($B = 0.18, p < .01$)
- Lower career consultation engagement ($B = -0.39, p = .01$)

Well-being predicted by:

- Greater family support ($B = -0.24, p < .01$)
- Being married ($B = 2.02, p = .01$)
- Greater work support (marginally; $B = 0.08, p = .05$)
- Network-building ($B = 0.36, p = .02$)

Satisfaction with work-family balance predicted by

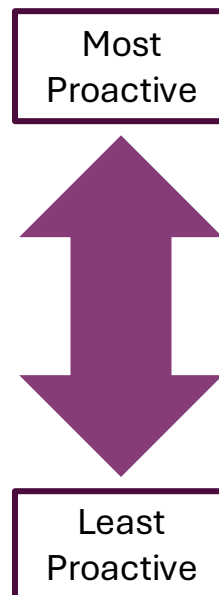
- Greater work support ($B = 0.14, p < .01$)
- Greater family support ($B = 0.17, p = .01$)

Gender Differences

- Compared to male peers, female health professionals perceived:
 - Lower work support ($t(143) = -2.94, p = .008; M = 3.36$ vs. 3.70)
 - Lower satisfaction with work-family balance ($t(143) = -2.49, p = .014; M = 3.12$ vs. 3.75)

Qualitative Findings

Five career management approach groups with differing proactivity levels identified:



- 5 General career aim/vision with smaller, intentional goals or steps along career development journey
- 4 Pursue non-conventional healthcare career pathways
- 3 Pursuit of career autonomy and freedom
- 2 Passive career development
- 1 Disengaged from advancing or developing careers

Health professionals move from one of the five career management approach groups to another group

- Impacted by resources and life demands at any point in their career journey
- Proactivity is malleable and can be improved with knowledge, training, and guidance on how to think about careers

Challenges

- Uncertainties of future career path possibilities
- Competing work, non-work and career development demands (instrumental stressors)
- Stress & anxiety of balancing work, non-work, and career development tasks (emotional stressors)

Resources

- Personal resources (time, energy, risk appetite)
- Support & career conversations with family, friends, supervisors, colleagues, peers, role models
- Awareness of personal work values & preferences
- Reviewing career plans & goals
- Finances for further training

CONCLUSION

- Work and family support contribute towards better career outcomes and provide resources for health professionals to deal with the instrumental and emotional stressors of developing one's career
- Having mentor(s) and engaging in career consultation were negative predictors of work engagement and career satisfaction
 - Health professionals consult with mentors and others when dissatisfied with work and career
 - Low proactivity career management approach groups in qualitative findings suggest not all health professionals do so
- Network-building as a predictor of work engagement and well-being, and reporting of having career conversations as a resource suggest need to enhance networking opportunities, both formal and informal, for health professionals
- Health professionals' approach to managing their careers are varied due to resources and demands in various 'seasons' of life and career journey
 - Need to tailor support, training and guidance for health professionals in different life and career stages

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