



Assessing the Impact of a Proactive Personality on Early Employment Status and Job Search Behavior: The Role of Career Planning and the Moderating Effect of Core Self-Evaluation

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Abstract: This study ascertains the conditional indirect effects of core self-evaluation and career planning, particularly regarding early employment status and job search behavior based on the theory of planned behavior. For this purpose, we collected data from 400 respondents using the simple random sampling method. The results reveal that most young graduates have early career success if they possess initiative and a thoughtful disposition and demonstrate rigorous job-seeking behavior. Young people can access early employment opportunities if they adopt a proactive approach toward their careers. Effective career planning with active career searching behavior, supplemented by high levels of core self-evaluation, can increase chances of early career success. Moreover, our findings have practical implications for young people in terms of encouraging them to plan their careers in a more organized and proactive manner.

Keywords: Proactive personality, job search behavior, core self-evaluation, theory of planned behavior, career planning.

JEL Classification: M10, M12, M50, M51.

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1. Introduction

In the modern world, conventional standards of employment have been replaced by employability, and relations have become more transactional. These changes demand that individuals be vigilant and proactive in achieving success (Greenhaus et al., 2010). Both dispositional and situational attributes shape human behaviors. In this context, personality traits have been extensively studied and include examining the proactive characteristics of individuals. Individuals who practice proactive behavior essentially engage in dynamic and rational behavior. This could be as simple as searching for better employment insights and identifying opportunities. As a corollary, these individuals are likely to act on their insights and learning, show appropriate initiative and persevere until they generate meaningful change in their personality, search for employment, job search behavior, and career planning. This is characterized as core self-evaluation in which people appraise themselves and their functions in their respective environments (Ans et al., 2009; Hillebrandt et al., 2022). On the other hand, individuals who are low in terms of productivity are less responsive and less able to adapt to changes in their circumstances (Liang & Gong, 2013).

This study aims to describe the relationship between a proactive personality and early employment status and job search behavior by incorporating mediated and moderated models of career planning and core self-evaluation. Previous research undertaken in this field has not explored this moderated and mediated model or overt behavior as a job search effort (Le & Lin, 2021; Zhou et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2021). We examine whether proactive personality types influence graduate-level individual employment status and job search behavior (possessing job-seeking skills and making job-seeking efforts). The proactive predisposition of individuals has been proven to be related to various instrumental outcomes. We explore how this predisposition of fresh university graduates relates to their career success while investigating the arbitrating impact of career planning and the moderating effect of core self-evaluation. This is particularly relevant given the current global uncertainty in employment and employability (Ruffolo et al., 2021; Sobieralski, 2020; Svabova et al., 2021).

A proactive personality type can be defined as an individual's disposition to take actions that affect the environment to which they belong (Maan et al., 2020; Seiber et al., 1999). Robbins and Coulter (2016) describe proactive personalities as individuals prone to taking concrete actions to influence their environment. A growing body of literature suggests that proactive individuals have the significant prerequisite of employee work performance when adjusting within an organization (Jiang et al., 2023; Simon et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Recent studies posit that the extent to which proactive employees are likely to make career planning moves is an aspect of their core self-evaluation, in which they self-appraise to function effectively in their external environment (Liang and Gong, 2013; Shen et al., 2021). Proactive individuals seek opportunities, take the appropriate action and initiative, and persevere in their efforts until meaningful change occurs, enabling them to achieve their career aspirations. A recently published meta-analysis proposes that proactive individuals demonstrate higher career achievements and accomplishments as they use their mobility to accomplish their career goals (Turban et al., 2017).

The literature shows that an individual's proactive behavior is related to several factors. These include a young graduate's career adaptability, early employment outcomes achieved, qualifications and career mobility pathways, career accomplishments, and career satisfaction (Alkhemeiri et al., 2021; Wang & Lei, 2021; Wang et al., 2019). Moreover, the research has helped define how proactive behavior is positively associated with key psychological concerns. These include the readiness to undertake job transfers, the ability to transition, job search success (such as the number of interviews and jobs obtained as graduates), career behavior, early employment status, career planning and self-evaluation. We focus on the impact of the proactive personality type on employment status and job search behavior. The study also sheds light on the mediating effect of employee career planning, which aims to establish career objectives, accomplishments and strategies to achieve these objectives (Fahmi & Ali, 2022; Gould, 1979; Haitao, 2021). Another goal of this study is to analyze the moderating influence of core self-evaluation on the relationship between career planning and proactive behavior.

Various researchers have argued that core self-evaluation plays a significant role in understanding the proactive behavior exhibited by employees (Nie et al., 2022; Parker et al., 2019; Tisu et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2021). Core self-evaluation is the degree to which people like or dislike themselves. People with high levels of core self-evaluation are considered productive, competent and strong in their internal locus of control. A recent

study found that employees who rated highly in terms of core self-evaluation typically chose to perform complex tasks more often (Kim & Beehr, 2020). Conversely, those who demonstrated negative core self-evaluation were not open to risk-taking behavior. Instead, they accepted their current capabilities and regarded themselves as less enthusiastic and less courageous in their professional environment (Scandura, 2017).

Based on these insights, we propose that core self-evaluation has a strong moderating and contingent effect on proactive personality types, particularly regarding early employment status and job search behavior via career planning (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Individuals with proactive behavior tend to predict and seek options and opportunities in new or changing contexts. They also take challenging and critical initiatives, strive to execute the necessary changes and ultimately create unique environments for themselves and others around them. On the other hand, individuals whose proactive personality is passive tend to abdicate responsibility: they allow conditions to worsen and are easily influenced by their environment. Proactive personality types are known to make appropriate career choices, such as seeking higher salaries, greater career satisfaction, promotions and accomplishments. They then work actively to attain these goals (Maurer & Chapman, 2018).

With these considerations in mind, this study aims to add value to the theoretical literature in various ways. We begin by testing hypothesized moderated mediation models. Proactive personality types affect employment status and job search behavior by focusing on the career planning process as a strongly mediating variable (Liang & Gong, 2013; Presbitero, 2015). Paying attention to the prospects for career success means exhibiting proactive behavior, in which career planning can play a key role in translating a graduate's envisioned professional career into more specific career goals and behaviors. This is particularly true for young graduates who identify core self-evaluation as a dispositional moderating variable. This moderating effect, along with its conditional intervening effect, accounts for interventions that may help young graduates start new ventures and, in the school-to-work transition (Valls et al., 2020).

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

The theory of planned behavior supports the framework of this study. Behavioral intentions may be determined by three factors: perceived behavioral control, attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms (Sihombing, 2011). The theory states that the intention behind a particular

behavior is the most important antecedent of that behavior. In response, the intentions of an individual are predicted by the controls of behavior, perceived norms and expected utility (Jones, 2003). This suggests that the predictor of the theory of planned behavior influences decisions and leads to a response. Research indicates that individual and contextual factors contribute positively to proactive behavior (Crant, 2000). The theory of planned behavior also explains rational attitudes and behavior because proactive behavior can be considered highly rational.

2.1. Proactive Personality and Employment Status

People are not always unresponsive to environmental challenges and obstacles and may be deliberately able to turn around a situation to their advantage (Diener et al., 1984). In rapidly changing circumstances, which may not be clearly defined, it is rational to assess those employees and individuals who might frame their work to conform to their abilities or personality. Individuals with proactive personalities are considerably less controlled by other factors and their environment. Eagerness, courage, enthusiasm and the willpower to strategize their actions are primary determinants that classify such individuals as active and rational people in models of personal and individual development (Antonacopoulou, 2000).

The association between proactive behavior and career success has been explored in interactional psychology (Endler & Magnusson 1977). The interactional approach suggests a complex process whereby individuals select, interpret and change their specific situation to their advantage (Terborg, 1981). A person who exhibits proactive behavior can build an effective social network and improve his/her performance (Thompson, 2005). Moreover, people with proactive personalities seek out opportunities and knowledge for refining ideas, as they do not wait passively for options. Such individuals seek to explore opportunities to achieve more meaningful outcomes.

Expectancy theory proposes that a specific behavior type results from expected consequences and effects. Vroom (1964) proposes that a person who decides to behave in a particular manner is exercising a conscious choice based on the expected result, which he can produce through this chosen behavior. This theory shows that individuals can be motivated if they believe their efforts will improve their performance, which will then be rewarded, and that this reward will satisfy an essential need within that individual. The proactive behavior of an individual serves as a motivational force in making them put in the extra effort required to

attain significant and attractive outcomes. Based on the discussion above, we can assume that proactive personality types gain employment more quickly than passive personality types. Therefore, we hypothesize that a proactive personality and employment status are positively related in the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: A proactive personality is positively related to employment status.

2.2. Proactive Personality and Job Search Behavior

A proactive personality significantly influences the success of an individual's job searches (Brown et al., 2006). Such individuals have more chances of success in their careers than those who are more complacent (Yean et al., 2013). A proactive personality has an incremental impact on the individual's job search behavior and efforts (Valls et al., 2020). Job search behavior is the general effort an individual must put in to achieve success. An individual with a proactive temperament, motivated by the efforts and rewards relationship, will put in more targeted and vigorous efforts to seek employment. Efforts to attain their goals indicate the time, effort, focus and level of concentration that job seekers put into their job search (Blau, 1993). It seems logical that an individual with a high level of effort will recognize the importance of its outcome and is more likely to be engaged in job search behavior.

According to Crant (2000), individuals with a typical proactive personality 'pinpoint opportunities and act on them, make an effort to take action, and stick to it until meaningful change occurs.' In another study, Brown et al. (2006) affirm that proactive personality types have a considerably more relevant relationship with their job search efficiency, behavior, outcome and conscientiousness. Based on these ideas, we can therefore postulate that individuals with a proactive personality will not let themselves be negatively affected by the situation. Moreover, according to expectancy theory, a proactive individual will make conscious efforts that could lead to superior performance. This high level of performance will lead to the desired outcomes. Therefore, we propose in the following hypothesis that an individual who possesses a proactive personality will be vigorously involved in job search behavior.

Hypothesis 2: A proactive personality is positively related to job search behavior.

2.3. Proactive Personality and Career Planning

The research shows that career self-management behaviour is positively related to career planning. In contrast, the relationship between career self-management behavior during early career stages is positively associated with career satisfaction and salary (Ans et al., 2009). An individual's personality is a natural predisposition that includes the call to take the initiative across various actions and circumstances (Crant, 2000). Such an inherent quality usually enables a person to benefit from their situation and pursue their careers and goals. Therefore, we can reasonably assume that individuals with this disposition tend to plan their career goals and do not submit passively to circumstances (Bell & Staw, 1989). Thus, individuals with a proactive personality type are well aware of their plans and try to make informed career choices (Greenleaf, 2011; Parker et al., 2006), an understanding of which ultimately leads to career planning (Grant & Ashford, 2008).

Individuals with a proactive personality tend to adopt an action-oriented approach and change their conditions themselves (Greenleaf, 2011). Furthermore, according to Seibert et al. (2001), proactive individuals focus on activities that lead to positive career planning and advancement. Therefore, we can deduce that individuals' proactive and rational behavior will lead them to actively engage in making career plans. Consequently, they will take the necessary steps to achieve their career goals. We can thus hypothesize that an individual with a proactive personality must be a good career planner to have a successful professional future. This indicates a direct association between proactive personality type and career planning (Presbitero, 2015). This positive link between proactive personality type and career planning is proposed in the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: A proactive personality is positively related to career planning.

2.4. Career Planning and Employment Status

Existing research provides significant quantitative evidence of the effect of career planning on early employment status and employee overt job search (Gould, 1979; Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Zikic & Klehe, 2006). Professional occupations with valued outcomes can be realized with proper career planning. Gould's career planning model (1979) assumes that an individual's employment, career choices, and career plans are related to setting realistic goals. This practice energizes, expedites and streamlines an

individual's efforts toward achieving their goals, as these goals determine their actions. This leads to a framework of motivation (Locke et al., 1981).

When a person is involved in career planning, it gives them a twofold level of motivation. First, the individual sets and defines strategies that can help achieve their goals. Second, they are motivated to achieve their targets (Aryee & Debrah, 1993). Thus, fresh graduates who possess highly ambitious, proactive and rational personalities will seek more opportunities for job hunting because career planning inspires them to engage in concentrated job search behavior. Likewise, when individuals plan their career goals and strategies, they identify how they should undertake job search activities that conform to their level of education (Saks & Ashforth, 2002).

More concentrated and organized career planning helps individuals find jobs or positions they value. Thus, graduates with highly proactive personalities tend to secure more opportunities to search for employment that matches their career aims and objectives and enhances their academic growth and the time they have put in to attain their qualifications. This indicates the positive effects of career planning on better job outcomes, particularly after graduates have completed their education and face the job market (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). We propose, in the following hypothesis, that career planning will positively affect job search behavior, resulting in better jobs and career success and ultimately better employment status.

Hypothesis 4: Career planning is positively related to employment status.

2.5. Career Planning and Job Search Behavior

There is a positive association between an employee's job search behavior and career planning for a successful job search. Careers can be improved over time through more effective career planning. Employees who develop thorough career paths are more likely to become successful in terms of career accomplishments, trajectory improvements and growth. Moreover, employees who make meaningful career planning efforts and adopt innovative tactics enjoy better professional chances than individuals who cannot employ these tactics (Orpe, 1994).

Individuals who engage in efficient career planning take responsibility for their careers and reap the advantages of doing so, even if their plans and tactics become obsolete and are not deemed applicable in any situation (Hall, 1994; William, 1997). Career planning initiatives urge

individuals to engage in in-depth job searches, which help them identify their career goals and develop strategies to accomplish them. Such individuals are more prone to searching for action points they can adopt when searching for an employment opportunity that meets their qualifications (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). Hence, we propose a direct relationship between career planning and job search behavior in the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 5: Career planning is positively related to job search behavior.

2.6. Proactive Personality, Career Planning and Employment Status

Employees are considered active and rational rather than passive reactors (Ashford & Taylor, 1990; Griffin et al., 2000). Self-determination is a key concept in psychology that refers to people's ability and choice to manage their careers and professional lives. This level of aptitude makes individuals feel that their thinking and active behavior play a crucial role in their psychological health and wellbeing; as a result, they feel ambitious and determined in their careers. Thus, self-determination theory focuses on encouraging people to feel motivated to act and allows them to feel they have control over their choices and outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The proactive personality type correlates positively with career adaptability, mediated by emotional exhaustion (Wang et al., 2021). In addition, previous research has shown that self-determined employees are more prone to engage in career management activities (Ashford & Black 1996). Their search for career desires (Seibert et al., 1999) conforms to their career aspirations and values in their work lives (Holland, 1985). Based on this discussion, we derive the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 6: A positive relationship between a proactive personality and employment status is mediated by career planning.

2.7. Proactive Personality, Career Planning and Job Search Behavior

Job search outcomes that result from active job-seeking initiatives are positively related to job search behavior (Blau, 1993). A proactive personality type contributes to expatriate cross-cultural adjustment (Hu et al., 2020). In theoretical terms, job search behavior is commonly described as the specific actions of an individual who is actively seeking knowledge about the labor market (Bretz et al., 1994). These activities include (i) gathering job-related information, (ii) taking preparatory action and

adopting behaviors related to the jobs they seek, (iii) pinpointing activities with the potential to address the planning phase of a job search (for example, reading 'wanted' advertisements), and (iv) active responses that are strongly related to the potential job search (Blau, 1993). Recent research has shown that more frequent and rational job searches will increase the number of job interviews, calls and conditional offers (Fang & Saks, 2022; Saks & Ashforth, 2000; van Hooft et al., 2021; Wanberg et al., 2020). Moreover, aspiring graduates who can accurately and precisely anticipate current labor market demand and supply can more easily anticipate perceptions of employability and employment status and gain a sense of control over their occupations and careers.

Graduates who weigh the options of employability exercise a higher sense of career control, and a proactive career can positively determine their engagement with career planning (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020). Based on these findings in the literature, we propose, in the following hypothesis, that a proactive personality will be vigorously involved in job search through career planning.

Hypothesis 7: A positive relationship between a proactive personality and job search behavior is mediated by career planning.

2.8. Moderating Role of Core Self-evaluation

Core self-evaluation has four common and well-studied complementary variables: emotional stability, self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, and locus of control (Judge et al., 2003). In addition, self-efficacy is an individual assessment of skills and the ability to apply for jobs under various conditions (Chen et al., 2001).

Emotional stability is a desirable trait, as it presupposes that an individual can withstand any situation and has the propensity to remain calm and stable (Evsenck, 1990). The locus of control is the individual belief that people have control over the outcomes of given situations and events (Rotter, 1966). Here, core self-evaluation is positively related to employee motivation, commitment and engagement (Chen et al., 2001; Erez & Judge, 2001; Judge & Bono, 2001). Core self-evaluation is also strongly related to job search success, early job success and high career success over time. This makes core self-evaluation a fundamental construct. An individual's proactive personality and career planning initiative, paired with high levels of core self-evaluation, tends to guarantee better job performance. These qualities have a positive impact on career, with employees reporting greater

job satisfaction, lower levels of stress and conflict, and the ability to cope more efficiently with setbacks (Judge, 2009).

Clear, challenging goals and the expectancy of outcomes will often lead to motivation to attain goals (Locke, 1981; Vroom, 1964). This motivation will be stronger for persons with higher core self-evaluation. Thus, the relationship between career planning and a proactive personality type will be more robust when core self-evaluation is high. This stronger relationship will ultimately lead to a higher level of effort and job search behavior by an individual. The motivation for goal achievement (career success) will trigger a greater level of effort and job search behavior when a person's core self-evaluation is high. Furthermore, according to Zhu et al. (2021), a proactive personality can influence positive career exploration, which can further predict job search; thus, the relationship between a proactive personality and career planning will be affected by the presence of high core self-evaluation. Moreover, a proactive personality and career achievements aim to increase employment status, which has an influence on individual psychological and physical well-being. The connection will be stronger when the core self-evaluation variable is higher rather than lower. This leads us to derive the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 8a. The positive indirect effect of proactive personality on employment status and career planning is moderated by core self-evaluation so that the effect is stronger when core-self evaluations are high than when they are low.

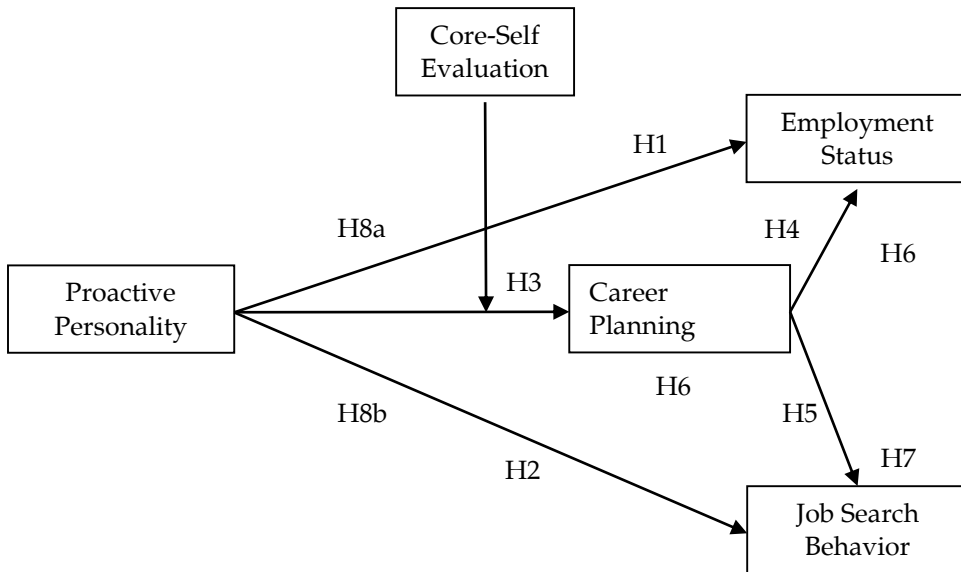
Hypothesis 8b. The positive indirect effect of proactive personality on job search behavior and career planning is moderated by core self-evaluation so that the effect is stronger when core-self evaluations are high than when they are low.

2.9. *Conceptual Model*

Proactive behavior generally focuses on turning around a given situation that challenges an individual's equilibrium. If the risk of taking action outweighs the benefits, employees may be reluctant to behave actively and rationally (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). We propose that the proactive personality type is statistically significant and positively related to early employment status and job search behavior. There are also positive indirect effects proposed in our research model: proactive personality → career planning → employment status and proactive personality → career planning → job search behavior. Additionally, core self-evaluation is

considered to moderate the positive association between proactive personality and career planning (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Our research design specifies the techniques and characteristics of this research, including the purpose of the study, type of study, time horizon, and units of analysis. The purpose of the study is to explore the possible effects of proactive personality type, along with the mediating and moderating effects of career planning and core self-evaluation. The data for this study are quantitative and empirical. The level of analysis centers on recent graduates based in Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Peshawar, who were randomly selected from these cities and taken as representative of the study population. The research design for this study is cross-sectional, using a one-shot study method, as the data were collected at only one interval in time. We have relied on primary data through the distribution of questionnaires among young graduates seeking jobs.

3.2. Sampling, Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected using a simple random sampling technique. Fresh graduates seeking early employment and displaying job search behavior were randomly selected from the cities of Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Peshawar. The data were analysed using the Preacher and Hayes PROCESS model 7, an add-in to the SPSS software used to moderate and mediate the analysis with the variables in question. A partial least-squares structural equation model (SEM) was developed using Smart PLS (v. 4) to calculate and graphically represent the path analysis, regression and partial least squares.

The sample comprised 400 young graduates who responded to self-administered questionnaires. The rule of thumb used to determine the sample size was to multiply the total number of items in the questionnaire by 5, 10 and 15. The questionnaire consisted of 59 items. According to standard estimates, the sample size criterion must typically be more than $59 \times 5 = 295$. The sample size used in this study was $N = 400$, which we believe is appropriate for the applicability of the results found.

3.3. Measures and Scales

We document the responses of participants on a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 and measures the study variables, including proactive personality, employment status, job search behavior, core self-evaluation, and career planning, where 1 denotes 'strongly disagree' and 5 represents 'strongly agree'.

The proactive personality variable is measured using a nine-point item scale developed by Bateman and Crant (1993). Cronbach's alpha for the nine items for this variable is 0.87. Employment status, the second variable, is measured using the two-point item scale developed by Valls et al. (2020). Cronbach's alpha for the two items for employment status is 0.57. Job search behavior is measured using the 16-point item scale that Blau (1993) has developed. Cronbach's alpha for job search behavior is 0.73. Career planning is measured using the seven-point item scale developed by Gould (1979). Cronbach's alpha for career planning is 0.97. Core self-evaluation, the moderating variable, is measured using the 13-point item scale developed by Judge et al. (2003). Cronbach's alpha for this variable is 0.74.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. Pearson Correlation Analysis

The results in Table 1 show that proactive personality type, employment status, job search behavior, core self-evaluation, and career planning are correlated.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Analysis Results

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Gender	1								
Marital status	.239**	1							
Age	-.176**	-.133	1						
Education	-3.53**	-.076	.419 **	1					
Experience	.147*	-.131 *	.302 **	-.052	1				
Proactive personality	.051	.159**	.178 **	-.184**	-.333	1			
Career planning	.351**	.244**	-.051	-.094	.342**	.278**	1		
Core self-evaluation	.380**	.425**	.351**	-.299**	.165**	.103	.200**	1	
Employment status	.088	.119*	.283**	-.325**	.380**	.258**	.056**	.317	1
Job search behavior	-.033	.014	.173**	.094	-.352**	.438**	.448**	.085	.235**

Note: Correlation is given in $r = 0.00^{**}$ and $p < .001$. $N = 400$. The reliability of related variables is stated in parentheses. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Proactive personality type has a strong relationship with employment status ($r = .258^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), which supports H1. We observe that proactive personality type is positively and significantly related to job search behavior ($r = .438^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), which supports H2. We see that the relationship between proactive personality type and career planning is positive and significant ($r = .278^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, the relationship between the mediating variable and employment status is weak to moderate ($r = .056^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). Finally, the relationship between career planning and job search effort shows a high correlation for this hypothesis ($r = .448^{**}$, $p < 0.01$).

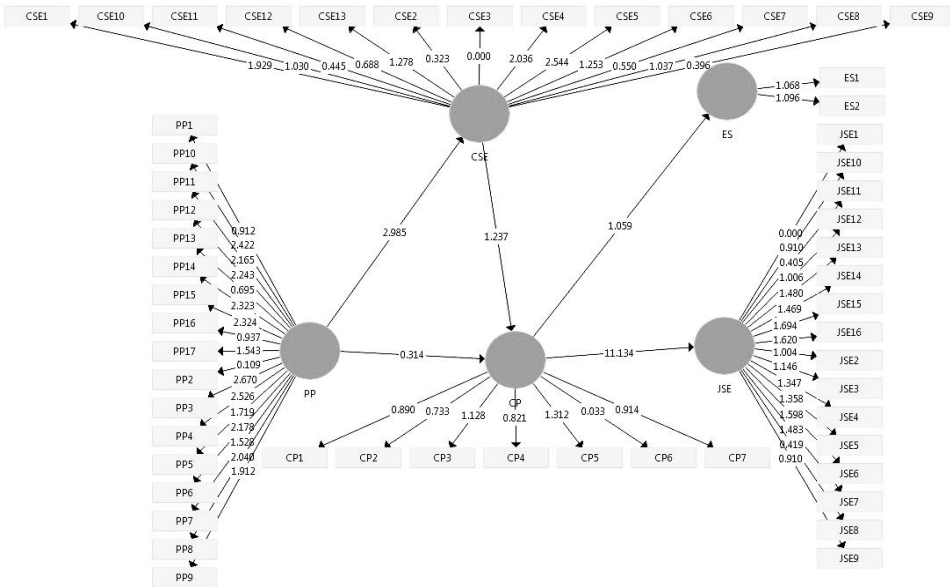
4.2. SEM Analysis

The objective of this study is to explore the impact of proactive personality types on employment status through career planning. An individual with a proactive personality exhibits greater career planning efforts, resulting in increased employment status and job search behavior. Through our analysis, we have also shown how core self-evaluation strongly affects the relationship between proactive personality, employment status and job search behavior. Our regression analysis

ascertains the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable and incorporates serial mediation and moderation. We use (model 7) of the PROCESS add-in, the latest and most commonly used model 1 for moderation and model 4 for mediation.

In Figure 2, the SEM employs SmartPLS (v. 4), in which the direct and indirect effects have been derived.

Figure 2: Partial Least-Squares SEM



The results support H1 (proactive personality has a direct, positive and significant relationship with employment status), where $\beta = 1.382$, $t = 5.135$ and $p < 0.000$. Under H2, proactive personality has a direct, positive and significant relationship with job search behavior, where $\beta = 14.972$, $t = 22.67$ and $p < 0.000$. Proactive personality has a direct, positive and significant relationship with career planning, where $\beta = 0.563$, $t = 7.723$ and $p < 0.000$. Under H4, career planning has a direct, positive and significant relationship with employment status, where $\beta = 1.277$, $t = 21.95$ and $p < 0.000$. Finally, under H5, career planning has a direct, significant and positive relationship with job search behavior, where $\beta = 1.165$, $t = 9.293$ and $p < 0.000$. We observe that career planning is positively and significantly mediated between proactive personality and employment status, with $\beta = 0.2005$, $t = 8.604$, and $p < 0.000$. Career planning is also positively and significantly mediated between proactive personality and job search behavior, with $\beta = 0.4405$, $t =$

4.520 and $p < 0.000$. Under H8, we see that core self-evaluation has a positive and significant moderation effect between proactive personality and career planning, with $\beta = 1.183$, $t = 3.9864$ and $p < 0.000$.

The goodness-of-fit statistics in Table 2 assess the overall fit of the hypothesized models. The most significant measure that represents the overall model is the likelihood ratio chi-square statistic X^2/DF , which is 2.31, that is, below the threshold limit of 3. The RMSEA ranges from 0.5 to 0.8, and therefore, at 0.7, it is within the acceptable limit. The NFI is significant at 0.973 and considered acceptable, as it is larger than the value of 0.95. The AGFI is found to be within the acceptable limit of 0.91, which is larger than the acceptable limit of 0.90. Finally, the CFI is 0.97, which is within the acceptable limit of 0.95.

Table 2: Model Fit Indices

Model	RMSEA	NFI	AGFI	GFI	CFI	X ² /df
Default model	0.70	.973	0.91	0.96	0.97	2.31

We use the Preacher and Hayes PROCESS model 7 model 1 to test the moderation effect among the study variables, employing a confidence interval of 95 percent with the bootstrapping technique 1,000. Interaction terms are used to investigate the factors of mediation and moderation. The results confirm the direct relationship between the variables considered. The relationship between proactive personality and employment status is positive, supporting hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2. The results for career planning and proactive personality are positive and significant, confirming hypothesis 3. However, career planning is also a significant predictor of employment status and job search behavior, thereby confirming hypothesis 4 and hypothesis 5.

We also use the Preacher and Hayes PROCESS (model 7) to assess the direct effects of proactive personality, career planning, employment status, and job search behavior (Table 3). In this regard, proactive personality is significantly related to employment status, job search effort and career planning, as the t value is greater than -2 and +2 and the p value is less than 0.00. Career planning is significantly related to employment status and job-seeking efforts.

Table 3: Direct Effects of Variables

Variables	Beta estimate	R	R ²	p	t	ULCI	LLCI
Direct effects							
<u>IV to DV</u>							
PP to ES	1.382	.0791	.0844	.0000	5.135	.0805	.0359
PP to JSB	14.972	.567	.7516	.0000	22.67	.5200	.4465
<u>IV to mediator</u>							
PP to CP	0.573	.8670	.7516	.0000	7.723	.4733	.2811
<u>Mediator to DV</u>							
CP to ES	1.277	.0555	.0531	.0000	21.95	.3330	.1147
CP to JSB	1.165	.5177	.5680	.0000	9.293	.9083	.5908

Note: PROCESS procedure for SPSS, Model 4. $p < .05$, p value: $0.00 < .05$, LLCI = lower-level confidence interval, ULCI = upper-level confidence interval, PP = proactive personality, CP = career planning, ES = employment status, JSB = job search behavior.

Table 4 gives the unstandardized regression coefficients. We use the mediation test of PROCESS (model 7) to assess the bootstrap for the mediation of career planning between proactive personality and early employment status (which supports hypothesis 6 and hypothesis 7). The results of the first mediated model are less significant than the second mediated model, particularly after the beta estimate is found to be .4405, which is higher than .2005, along with the values LLCI = .0294 and ULCI = .0483.

Table 4: Conditional Indirect Effects of Variables

			Beta Estimate	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
PP	CP	ES	.2005	.0113	.0146	.0156
PP	CP	JSB	.4405	.4438	.0294	.0483

Note: N = 400. Unstandardized coefficients of regression. Bootstrap = 5,000. LLCI = lower-level confidence interval, ULCI = upper-level confidence interval, PP = proactive personality, CP = career planning, ES = employment status, JSB = job search behavior.

The moderating role of core self-evaluation is assessed with proactive personality and career planning in H8. We observe that core self-evaluation tends to increase the effect on career planning through proactive personality. This finding indicates the result of the interaction term by multiplying the independent and mediating variables, which are also significant ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, a proactive personality type paired with career planning is taken as a combination that is a significant predictor of core self-evaluation. This is because the t-stat is greater than -2 and 2, and the p coefficient is also significant ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the value of the beta estimate is $\beta = 3.469$, which confirms hypothesis 8 (Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5: Regression Results

	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Proactive personality	3.817	.0002	1.126	3.5230
Core self-evaluation	4.008	.0001	1.832	5.365
PP * CP	3.9864	.0001	.0731	.0948
R2	.2359			
F	14.21			
P	.0000			

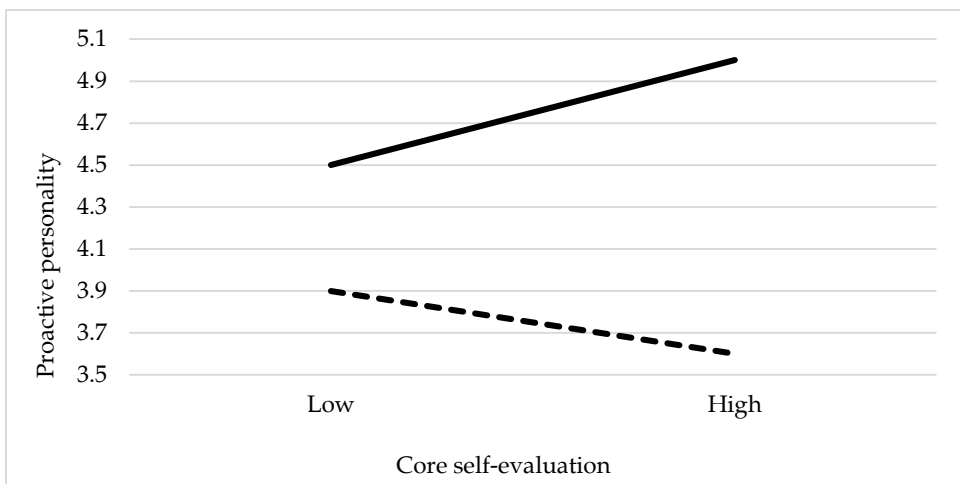
Table 6: Moderation Analysis Results

	ΔR^2	F	df1	df2	p
PP* CSE	.0569	15.89	1.000	296.000	.0000

Note: N = 400. Interaction terms by multiplying PP*CSE. LLCI = lower-level confidence interval, ULCI = upper-level confidence interval, PP = proactive personality, CP = career planning, ES = employment status, JSB = job search behavior.

We apply the terms of interaction to assess the conditional effects of the independent variable on the moderating variables. Figure 3 shows that the positive interaction between proactive personality and career planning is more potent when core self-evaluation is high rather than low, which supports hypothesis 8.

Figure 3: Interaction between Proactive Personality and Core Self-Evaluation in Career Planning



5. Discussion of Research Findings

Our results indicate that proactive personality and employment status are positively correlated, confirming hypothesis 1. The empirical results confirm the findings of Valls et al. (2020), who observe that a proactive personality positively influences a graduate's employment status. This also explains why psychological issues such as depression and stress and attitudinal issues such as low organizational commitment and low job satisfaction accompany these factors. A significant and strong relationship is observed between proactive personality and job search behavior. This confirms hypothesis 2 as well as the findings of Brown et al. (2006), who argue that proactive behavior helps individuals better understand the demands of a successful job search.

Similarly, the empirical findings of our third hypothesis were found to be highly significant in terms of the relationship between proactive personality and career planning. These results align with Presbitero (2015), who states that proactive occupations and career enacting can be viewed as taking initiatives that focus on career plans by actively implementing actions that address career goals. The results of career planning and employment status were also significant and support a robust correlation between career planning and employment status. Our findings confirm the analysis of Gould (1979), who explains how career planning helps identify opportunities for young, proactive graduates looking for career paths they consider a good fit for their personality.

The relationship between career planning and job search behavior was significant, supporting hypothesis 5. These results are in line with Guan et al. (2013), who stress that career planning takes control of the career development process, giving people access to various career development opportunities that give rise to domain-specific job searches. The results also support hypothesis 6, which depicts the relationship between proactive personality and employment status through career planning. These findings have been verified by Grant and Ashford (2008). The theoretical literature reveals that career planning empirically supports the first dependent variable through the mediating variable. This means that graduates exhibiting highly proactive behavior tend to focus on job searches more actively and rationally. Their career planning initiatives motivate them to be more engaged in active job-seeking behavior. Career planning also helps provide direction toward job positions of interest.

The results support hypothesis 7, which identifies the relationship between proactive personality and job search behavior through career planning. This has been verified by Claes (2002), who defines the relationship between proactive behavior and preparatory job search behavior. The empirical results of our final hypothesis, in which core self-evaluation moderates the relationship between proactive personality and career planning positively, were also significant. These results echo the findings of Liang and Gong (2013), who show that individuals' involvement in career planning and a proactive personality type, paired with a high level of core self-evaluation, leads to better job performance.

6. Implications and Future Research Directions

The study has contributed to the literature on the prospects available to proactive personality types in the context of aspiring graduates searching for employment, who stand to benefit from the employability insights and outcomes of the mediating effect of career planning. Young graduates can achieve good jobs if they adopt a proactive approach, given the current economic uncertainty. Moreover, young graduates with high levels of core self-evaluation can achieve better job performance and organizational career growth. This results in higher motivation to achieve their goals in the form of career growth and induces higher self-worth, higher salaries and greater accomplishments, which may further trigger greater efforts in terms of job-seeking behavior.

The findings of this study have certain limitations that future studies might overcome. First, the sample drawn for the study was quantitative, cross-sectional and comprised fresh graduates (based in Rawalpindi, Islamabad and Peshawar) seeking employment. Treating this as a research limitation, we suggest that future research use qualitative and mixed methods and longitudinal or time-series data collection methods. Moreover, researchers would be well advised to take samples from more than one timeframe across different cities of Pakistan.

Researchers are also advised to select a more diversified pool of potential candidates and fresh graduates. It is also necessary to gather a sample with greater educational heterogeneity. This would help assess the effects of proactive behavior on career success potential (subjective and objective career success), work engagement and career mobility. Moreover, a more comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of proactive personality types is needed by considering a broader range of universities, that is, extending the sample size and to different cities.

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