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Career self-management: the influence of proactive personality and leader-member exchange

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Abstract

This Master Thesis explores the idea of Career self-management (CSM). The main purpose of the study is to investigate the influence of proactive personality and leader-member exchange on career self-management behaviors, and if those attitudes, in turn, would lead to job satisfaction.

The data used in this study was obtained from a sample of 199 employees. Data was collected during summer 2022, using an online survey in English language. The hypotheses have been constructed based on the Literature review and tested with the use of SPSS macro-PROCESS (Hayes, 2016), with an analysis of the mediated moderation model.

Before reporting the details of the empirical study, the first part of this paper will be an introduction to the study. The second part will be based on the Literature review, which provides an insight to the main theories and studies related to the concepts. Then there will be a third section regarding the description of the sample and procedures used. The fourth section will be an overview of the main findings, along with the data analysis. Finally, the last chapter will discuss the findings of the study compared to the literature.

Overall, the study reports important findings for the literature. In fact, the relationship between the main construct presented exists, yet it has not been proven the direct connection of all the concepts.

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1. Introduction

Work has always been seen as a source of identity, as a status for the social context, therefore career development and progressions are a "major life constituency" (Baruch, 2003). Baruch (2003) has described the changing nature of work, as the process though which people shift from long-term-based career relationships to short-term-based ones. Moreover, in the past organizations were the main players for managing worker's careers, yet today this concept has evolved, and employees are seen as the fundamental contributors to their career development (Baruch, 2002). The author supports the idea that the traditional career concept, meaning to have a stable employment in a single organization for the whole working life, is now changing into transitional and flexible journeys. One of the reasons for this is the shift in the organizational structure, from hierarchical and rigid to flattered and boundaryless (Baruch, 2003). It is also related to the greater complexity and volatility of career environments, with the elimination of some types of jobs and the creation of new ones (Wilhelm and Hirshi, 2019).

In this context, the idea of career self-management has been introduced, receiving increasing attention since the end of the last century. This concept summarizes the dynamic process of the employee toward the proactive execution of a series of co-occurring behaviors that are aimed at improving its own career (King, 2004; Lent and Brown, 2013).

Scholars have reviewed factors that may influence the behaviors of the employee toward their career. For instance, Jung and Takeuchi (2018) have studied the role of developmental human resource practices and organizational support toward career-self management, finding out that individual and organizational factors positively influence career satisfaction. Another significant empirical research was made by Wilhelm and Hirshi (2019) on the relation between career self-management and career wellbeing, as the latter being one of the individual outcomes of which workers benefit.

Therefore, nowadays the individual perspective is key in the working environment. Individual differences impact the working life of each individual, so that not everyone follows the same career path or has the same career goals. Leadership is also another key element in the working environment, which constitutes the main provider of resources and knowledge for employees. However, in the literature there has been no evidence or research on the dual influence of the personal factor proactive personality and work factor leader-member exchange on career self-management. Consequently, the present study has the aim to investigate the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors, considering whether leader-member exchange moderates this effect. Finally, the study will explore the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management on job satisfaction.

This study is composed by the current introductory section and four other chapters. The next chapter encompass the literature review, including the definition of the fundamental notions and theories. Chapter three comprises the research methodology, with the description of the research sample and the design of the framework's variables. The fourth chapter contains the presentation and analysis of the findings of the study. Finally, the last chapter will sum up the conclusions, driving on the practical implications, the limitations and the suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to Career self-management

The nature of work has changed in the past years, mainly due to changes in the external context of organizations (Hinings, 2006). In the past, career development and employee retention was central for organizations, yet nowadays they are in a situation of chaos, due to continuous changes (Baruch, 2006). Therefore, the attention toward one's career has shifted from the organization to the individual. In this context, career self-management was developed. Career self-management (CSM) has been hardly defined over the years, yet there are two main views of this concept. The first one refers to King (2004), who conceptualizes CSM as an ongoing process, made of proactive career behaviors. The second one has been designed by Lent and Brown (2013). They have identified multiple challenges in today's working environment that employees have to facee. Overall, CSM is defined as a proactive mechanism to foster adaptation to these challenges.

King (2004) has argued that career self-management can be depicted starting from the model of vocational adjustment made by Crites (1969), which can be actually seen as an early conceptualization of CSM. Crites (1969) has studied the process through which employees are supposed to achieve job satisfaction. During the career path workers are motivated by several stimuli, either internal or external, or factors, such as good wages, appreciation for a well done work, job security, possibility to achieve promotion or to grow in the organization, and an interest in the job, which contributes to make them find the incentive to work (Wiley, 1995). However, Crites (1969) has supposed that employees will have to face an obstacle or a threat at a certain point within their career path. This difficult type of situation might trigger frustration and demotivation, which are counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) for the achievement of career goals. As a matter of fact, it has been ascertained that interpersonal conflicts, any source of stress, the impossibility or the obstruction of goal achievement are all predictors of negative emotions, that may lead the employee

to experience mistrust towards the organization or to even think about resigning (Spector, 2005). For Crites (1969) the mechanisms that workers will use to respond and react to work barriers or conflicts that they will encounter, is going to define their future career path, which may lead to success, thus job satisfaction, or failure, hence job dissatisfaction. This responsive mechanism will be implemented each time there will be an obstacle. Therefore, it will create a developmental process that employees will encounter cyclically in the course or their career. However, the way through which they will adjust or their responses will depend on the stage of their vocational adjustment, meaning that with the stage progression the response mechanism will improve (Crites, 1976). Therefore, the effects of what takes place in the workplace are a continuous on the career path.

King (2004) profoundly analyzed Crites' model and reviewed some parts of it, creating a new framework. Firstly, it was argued that different types of obstacles on different career paths do not have the same outcomes, hence they must be analyzed separately. Secondly, motivation is not the only driver of career self-management, but there are others that should be taken into consideration. Thirdly, there should have been a deeper focus on career outcomes. The main assumption of King's framework is that employees do not have the power and capability to control all the factors of their career, some of them, such as pay or job promotions, are out of their control. The author conceives CSM as "a dynamic process, involving execution of a set of co-occurring behaviors" (King, 2004), focusing on the causes predicting career self-management behaviors and their consequences. On one hand there are conditions leading to CSM, which have been delineated as: self-efficacy, defined as the confidence to accomplish a specific task in a given situation; desire for control over one's career, displayed in the response mechanisms; and career anchors, which are the principles that drive one's career path. On the other hand, there are consequences, which will vary depending on the career outcomes obtained. Thus, whether the result has been achieved, they may drive to career and life satisfaction, or if the consequences are repeatedly negative over time, it may lead to loss of control, conflict and demotivation, which may result for the author in learned helplessness, which is a feeling

emerging from persistent failures. Additionally, King (2001) has studied how the social and the political context related to career self-management can delineate the decision-making process. This framework basic concept is the dynamic nature of the decision making process, in fact there is no single or stand-alone behavior, but each behavior is co-occurring and interconnected with the others. The model is made of four cyclical steps. The first one is the chart of the landscape, which includes the understanding and the internalization of key information, such as the surrounding context as well as the available opportunities and the decision-maker profiles. Secondly, there should be the identification of the gatekeepers, which are people who have a specific interest over someone's career path (Tolbert, 1996). This also includes the identification of the criteria used by gatekeepers to recruit or promote personnel, in fact it is useful to understand the function of the assignment flow. The third step involves carrying out strategies that will help the gatekeeper to implement their decisions on behalf of the employee. These strategies are used to foster the improvement of skills, attitudes and experiences, some examples may be ingratiation, self-promotion, investments in human capital and network development. Yet, it is always important to keep in mind the organizational context, as not all strategies are functional for every organization. The final step is to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, which will enable the worker to analyze the strengths and weaknesses, in order to improve them for the future. Therefore, the feedbacks from the last stage are going to have repercussions in the newer first stage, confirming the cyclical nature of career self-management.

The other important model to take into consideration for CSM is the one made by Lent and Brown (2013), based on social cognitive career theory's (SCCT) existing model. SCCT was first developed in 1994 to explain the linkages in educational and vocational contexts. The aim was to connect the various theoretical interpretations and consider new ones, conforming with the idea of living in a social world, in which everything is influential. One of the differences between the SCCT and the self-management model is that the former is focused on the antecedents and consequence factors related to a specific work environment or field, whereas the latter is focused on behaviors that impact

the occupation but as part of a bigger view, as part of the employee's career. The basic assumption underpinning this theory is that employees have the possibility to implement the mechanisms of agency, they have the power to control some facets of their career to develop it how they prefer, yet not everything is in their control. Therefore, the author has introduced the term adaptive career behaviors, which are defined as "behaviors that people employ to help direct their own career (and educational) development" (Lent and Brown, 2013), especially ones that can be learnt. They can be clustered into two groups: developmental tasks, which include behaviors and activities that will evolve during time; and coping skills, which are the abilities to negotiate and adjust to challenging moments. The model identifies the predictors of CSM as proximal and distal antecedents. Proximal antecedents include cognitive-personal factors, such as self-efficacy, meaning the confidence of being able to accomplish a specific task; and outcome expectations, which is defined as the expected consequence of a determine action, which can be social, material or self-evaluative. There are also contextual factors, such as goals, environment support, absence of barriers, and personality variables, which are explained by the Big 5 model, though interests and abilities play a key role in driving CSM. Whereas distal antecedents can be described as the social address of the worker, which is the starting point made of gender, education, personality, socioeconomic status and others.

King (2004) and Lent and Brown (2013) outline the nature and the main concepts of career self-management. What follows is an account of the specific behaviors that exemplify the core construct.

2.2 CSM Behaviors

Overall, career self-management is described as the intention and the extent to which workers collect information and proactively implement actions to improve their work condition and, in the long period, their career (Kossek et al., 1998). Therefore, career self-management embraces both a cognitive and a behavioral dimension (King, 2004; Lent and Brown, 2013). The cognitive elements refer to the awareness and the power of being in control of your own career and the willingness to

take action in the best way to develop it. Whereas the behavioral part includes proper actions aimed at participating in CSM and fostering it.

As it has been introduced previously, the individual is nowadays at the center of the career development (Baruch, 2006), implementing strategies of proactive career behaviors in order to foster career self-management. Four types of behaviors have been found to be successful: career planning, skill development, consultation behaviors and networking behaviors (Claes and Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1998). Career planning has the aim of looking for actions and initiatives to improve one's future career. It encompasses that employees are the only one who can master their career. They are in charge of formulating plans, look for new options and decide new objectives. Career planning effectively reflects the workers intention to pursue a specific career goal. The second type of behavior is skill development, which includes the improvement and the acquirement of the knowledge of new useful duties and abilities for that job. Thirdly, consultation behaviors involve requesting for help and advice by colleagues, with the purpose of building career bridges and strengthen the integration in the working environment. Finally, networking behaviors encourage the formation of working networks that will help to undertake the other type of behaviors. In fact, "workers enact career networks as learning systems for knowing-why (values, interests, career motivation, personal meaning, identification) and knowing-whom (intra- and inter-firm, professional, social relations)" (Claes and Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1998). Additionally, King (2004) has identified three complementary behaviors that encourage career self-management. The first one is positioning behaviors, which refers to the skills and expertise that workers use to choose between mobility options, to invest in their career development with trainings and educational programs, to create the working network and develop new ideas for their work. The second is influence behaviors, which are ingratiation, self-promotion and upward influence, aimed at affecting their superior's decisions. Lastly, boundary management reflects the willingness to balance work and nonwork behaviors. It encompasses the delimitation of the boundary and the transition between the two parties.

Furthermore, other two authors that have delineated some examples of career self-management behaviors (Lent and Brown, 2013). They have defined adaptive career behaviors as "behaviors that people employ to help direct their own career (and educational) development". They have divided them based on career life period and life role into five stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, disengagement/reengagement. For instance, the growth period concerns the development of skills, values and attitudes, whereas the establishment period focuses on finding ways to manage work, to cope with stress, to prepare and engage in new behaviors. Sometimes, it may occur that behaviors of an earlier period are used afterwards or overlaps take place, yet this is not necessarily negative, though it is the evidence of the destructuring of careers, as they become less linear and hierarchical with a focus on the individual.

Further examples of these approaches are investments in human capital, networking, career planning and managing the boundaries between work and nonwork. Additionally, voice, taking charge and voluntarily skill behavior have been identified as other samples of impactful behaviors (Lent et al., 2022). Hirshi A. et al (2014) have, in fact, demonstrated that employees are regularly engaged in multiple proactive behaviors at the same time.

Career self-management behaviors (CSMB) present practical evidence to be measured and it is an interesting topic to analyze in more depth. Therefore, CSMB are going to be researched in this study. In particular, it will be considered how they are affected by proactive personality, the theory of leader-member exchange and whether the engagement in career self-management behaviors leads to job satisfaction. These topics will be presented in the following pages.

2.3 Proactive personality

Proactive personality is defined by Bateman and Crant (1993) as a tendency to enact or change someone's environment and later on as "taking initiative in improving current circumstances or creating new ones; it involves challenging the status quo rather than passively adapting to present

conditions" (Crant, 2000). In fact, a proactive person is described as someone who is not limited by situational forces, though is ready to effect environmental change. There is a direct link between the person and the environment, due to which individuals are able to influence situations. Proactive personality means being dynamic, find and solve problems, seek new opportunities, show initiative, drive for significant change and participate in career management activities (Bateman and Crant, 1993; Seibert, Crant and Kraimer, 1999). Whereas passive individuals exhibit the opposite paradigms, they are unwilling to look out for opportunities, they fail to identify them, to work for changes and they seek to keep the status quo, thus they are likely to just adapt and accept current circumstances.

Proactive personality has usually been viewed as a personal disposition, yet Bateman and Crant (1993) have demonstrated that it is different from other common personality traits, such as the ones explained by the five general factors model of personality, which are now called "Big Five". It appears that the proactive disposition is not correlated to all factors of the model, but just to conscientiousness and extraversion. It is not linked to neuroticism and agreeableness. Openness may have a relation with proactivity, but it encompasses tolerance, which may be a precursor of passivity. The authors have also researched a possible connection with other traits, which were locus of control, need for achievement and need for dominance, yet they proved to profoundly differ from the first one and be slightly related to the second and third. Though, the level of proactivity is determined by individual differences (Seibert, Crant and Kraimer, 1999). Two fundamental antecedents have been depicted in Crant's research (2000), which are individual differences, as desire for feedbacks, and contextual factors, as organizational culture.

There has been a substantial interest and evidence in the relation between proactive personality and the working environment, specific attention has been given to career success (Seibert, Crant and Kraimer, 1999). As a matter of fact, findings have suggested that proactive personality is positively related to a series of positive organizational outcomes, as long as career success (Crant, 2000). The first authors to link proactive personality and career success were Seibert, Crant and Kraimer in 1999,

stating that there is a strong rational proposing that career success is a comprehensive outcome of several behaviors over the years, that are mainly influenced by personality factors. In this view, personality traits are influential on each single behavior and therefore altogether are a central part of the final result. Additionally, in their model they have tested the positive impact of proactive personality on career success, utilizing a broad set of variables, such as "transformational leadership, the job performance of real estate agents, socialization and organizational entry, entrepreneurial vocational interests and career planning", to demonstrate in the end that proactivity has a notable effect on employee career success. Proactive personality enables employees to approach their work differently than not proactive employees, with more willingness to succeed and work as hard as they can to achieve their career goals.

Career success is defined as the "accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur, Khapova and Wilderom, 2005). Nowadays, employees are the ultimate responsible of their career success and it is, therefore, for them to decide what are the best career options to choose and what career plan to follow (Seibert, Crant and Kraimer, 2001). In this regard, career self-management refers to the resourcefulness employees show in relation to managing their own work life (De Vos and Soens, 2008). Hence, there is a direct connection between managing your own career and trying to achieve the goal of career success.

Srikanth (2012) has already proved the connection between proactive personality and career self-management. He has found out that proactive people are more likely to find new job opportunities, which enables them to select and decide upon multiple options for the places they are willing to stay in the most. The final conclusion was that proactive personality has a major influence on career self-management behaviors. The same conclusion was reached by Yu et al. (2021), through a study on the antecedent role of proactive personality on career self-management behaviors, as there was evidence that proactive personality had an effect on career goals.

To sum up, in this section it has been outlined that one of the main assumptions to achieve career success is to be proactive (Seibert, Crant and Kraimer, 1999). Moreover, career success is strictly connected with career self-management, in the way in which employees manage their career to obtain success (De Vos and Soens, 2008). Therefore, it may be supposed that the more an individual is inclined to have a proactive personality the more incline they will be to engage in career self-management behaviors. In this view, the first testable hypothesis can be presented.

H1: Proactive personality is positively associated with career self-management behaviors.

Another important construct in the study is job satisfaction, which will be analyzed with more depth in the next section. Though, in this paragraph the linkages justifying a connection between proactive personality and job satisfaction will be delineated.

There is evidence indicating that proactive people perform actions that will lead them to greater job satisfaction, as they tend to generate advantageous situations for developing this (Li et al., 2010). Job satisfaction reflects the extent to which an employee is happy with their job, as the outcome of personal success at work (Li et al, 2010). In fact, job satisfaction has proved to be stable over time and along with situations as the result of personal characteristics, so that proactive personality has been powerfully connected to job and career satisfaction (Franek and Vecera, 2008; Li et al., 2010). Likewise, according to Ng et al. (2005), proactivity is one of the stronger predictors of work satisfaction. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that proactive personality can be related to extraversion, which is one of the personal characteristics that foresee job satisfaction (Li et al, 2017). Li et al. (2017) in their study demonstrated that proactive people have a higher tendency to experience self-efficacy and perform task behaviors, which are two essential parameters for job satisfaction.

Therefore, it can be assumed that higher levels of proactive personality may lead to higher levels of satisfaction with one's job. The second hypothesis can be presented.

H2: Proactive personality is positively associated with job satisfaction.

2.4 Job satisfaction

Hoppock (1935) had described job satisfaction as the combination of phycological states, impacted by several external elements, that lead the individual to have feelings of satisfaction towards their work. Whereas Vroom (1964) concentrates its attention on the employee and its motivation to work, thereby satisfaction is described as the positive tendency towards a specific job. Spector defines job satisfaction as "the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs" (1997). This suggests that job satisfaction is a general or global affective reaction that individuals hold about their job. This construct, in fact, may reflect positive and negative people's feelings related to their work.

Job satisfaction is a theme which has been widely researched over the years, in the following paragraph some influential variables analyzed by different authors will be outlined.

Christen, Iyer and Soberman (2006) have focused their investigation on the relationship between job satisfaction, job performance and effort. They have found that there is a positive impact of job performance on job satisfaction and a positive effect of effort on job satisfaction. Along with their findings, they have concluded that the implementation of policies related to job performance may be legitimized with the positive impact on worker's satisfaction. Furthermore, they have added other positive related consequences, such as the reduction of absenteeism, which causes additional costs and issues to the organizations, and the reduction of the turnover rate. However, the effect is stronger for dissatisfaction, which is very likely to cause absenteeism, whereas satisfaction does not necessarily lead to lower absenteeism (Aziri, 2011). Moreover, Ying-Chang et al. (2010) likewise have found that worker satisfaction has a positive effect on the reduction of employee turnover. Indeed, employee retention is particularly important for organizations, as a high turnover rate has correlated costs, due to the loss of personnel, hiring and training the new workforce (O'Connell and Kung, 2007). Turnover can be described with the honeymoon-hangover effect, which explains the

sequence of emotions and actions that take place (Boswell, Boudreau and Tichy, 2005). In fact, turnover is anticipated by a period of low satisfaction which will culminate in resignation, then the employee will enter a new job and he/she will experience the honeymoon period, in which there are high expectations, positive feelings and willingness to contribute. Yet, after a while the level of satisfaction will slowly decrease, which will lead to the hangover effect. This final stage will be the driver to quit the company and afterwards find a new one, so that the process will start over. Definitely, job satisfaction has been defined as a function of job change (Boswell et al., 2005). Additionally, according to Rue and Byaes (2003), factors as manager's concern, job design, working conditions, social relations and opportunities influence the level of job satisfaction, which can range from extreme satisfaction to dissatisfaction. Herzberg (1964) with the two-factor theory has grouped motivators, such as achievement, responsibility, recognition, career advancement and the work itself, which lead to satisfaction; and hygiene factors, including working conditions, salary, supervision, company policies and job security, as the ones leading to dissatisfaction. Loyalty is highly correlated with satisfaction, in fact a higher level of satisfaction consequently results in higher levels of employee loyalty (Vanderberg and Lance, 1992). From these observations, it can be deducted that job satisfaction is a construct that is influenced by several components across the individual life.

Having defined what is meant by job satisfaction and what factors over the years may have been influencing it, let's now move on to discuss what is the relation between job satisfaction and career self-management. Jung and Takeuchi (2018) have studied the relation between satisfaction and career. It has been defined that job satisfaction is a key factor for career success, focusing on the concept of the individual at the center of their own career development. They have verified that the main contributors to satisfaction are personal motivational processes, specifically the achievement of career goals and the fulfillment of needs. The basic theory behind their study is the COR theory, which suggests that career satisfaction can be reinforced by a deeper attention on resources, as especially personal resources are the main factor that can influence the work environment. The most

prominent personal resource was theorized to be career self-management. As a matter of fact, career self-management behaviors enhance the achievement of career goals and career satisfaction, as workers are the final architects of their career. Furthermore, it was found that career development programs, such as trainings, and needs of research and development were predictors of job satisfaction, whereas career plateauing was identified as a construct encouraging dissatisfaction (De Oliveira, Cavazotte and Dunzer, 2019). Moreover, job satisfaction is a fundamental element for career development as the process of being inclined or not towards a particular type of employment enables the person to take the right direction towards their final career goal (Adekola, 2011).

In line with the presented findings, the importance of satisfaction related to work and, in a bigger picture, to the overall career can be confirmed. Hence, it may be supposed that the more someone engages in the development of their own career with a profound intention to achieve goals the more satisfied they will be. Therefore, the third testable hypothesis can be presented.

H3: *Career self-management behaviors are positively correlated with job satisfaction.*

This section has outlined the role of job satisfaction in relation to career self-management, yet researchers have been also studying the effect between proactive personality and job satisfaction. In fact, as it has been reported in the previous section about proactive personality, there is a strong connection between proactive personality and job satisfaction (Ng et al., 2005; Li et al., 2017). Thus, it can be assumed that the positive relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction is mediated by career self-management behaviors, so that the more someone that has a proactive personality engages in career self-management behavior the easier they will attain job satisfaction.

H4: *The positive relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction is mediated by career self-management behaviors.*

2.5 Leader-member exchange theory

The leader-member exchange theory (LMX) has been developed by Graen and Scandura in the 1970s. This dyadic theory has been summed up by Erdogan, Berrin and Bauer, Talya (2015). While most common behavioral leadership theories focus on the behavior of the leader, the leader-member exchange theory focuses on the relationship between the manager and the members of its team. In fact, the basic assumption of LMX is that leaders are influential, so that the quality of the relationship they build with their team members impacts the overall group. The differential way in which leader develop the relationship creates different group dynamics. The rational beneath that theory is social exchange, which affirms that with top quality relationships people are able to share valuable resources, leaders support the members and provide them with benefits. Thank to these behaviors, members are willing to reciprocate with loyalty and good performance. This mechanism usually fosters better work outcomes.

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) have concluded that LMX is formed by several dimensions, yet there is a high correlation between all of them. Therefore, it can be theorized that there are three underlying dimensions that collect all the others: mutual trust, respect and obligation. These components are explicitly referred to the working environment and not to the personal life components.

The antecedents of LMX can be delineated as following: similarity and attraction phenomenon; dyad expectations; member personality; perceptions of fairness; and trust development. Liden et al. (1993) have shown that the LMX pattern starts to form very early in the relationship and is maintained throughout it. The given explanation was that the high level of trust created enables both parts to mitigate every action with that feeling. If the leader would engage in behaviors of mistrust, it has been seen that the member would have not reacted with punishments, thanks to the reminder of the past behaviors, which would enable them to be easily forgiven (Shapiro et al, 2011).

Regarding the consequences of LMX, three possible categories can be taken into consideration: job attitudes, behaviors and career success (Erdogan, Berrin & Bauer, Talya, 2015). Specifically, the strongest relationships concern job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Moreover, the association with career success shows career improvements, thanks to LMX, such as career progressions, increase in salary and higher satisfaction. These factors, as a consequence, enable the worker to be more efficient and achieve better performances. Indirectly, the manager will be more satisfied as well and will be more likely to improve their view of the employee, so that they will be more inclined to sponsor them in the company.

As mentioned above, leader member exchange quality has an effect on career success. It has been researched that leaders do not engage in the same way with all workers, yet they engage with some with high quality levels of exchange and with others with low quality levels (Breland et al., 2007). Thus, there is the formation of two main groups: the in-group in which there are the ones with high quality relationship and the out-group where there are the ones with the low quality relationship. This distinction differentiates the abilities of workers to engage in specific work tasks and to make career advancements. Therefore, employees in high quality relationship with their leaders most easily achieve career success in the future, whereas employees with low quality exchange with leaders have more difficulties (Breland et al., 2007). Another study from Erdogan et al. (2004) also proved the positive affect of leader member exchange as well on career success, based on the same belief that higher quality relationships provide support and resources to career success. Finally, findings from Sturges et al. (2010) have proved the direct connection between leader member exchange and career self-management. They have given multiple explanations for these linkages. The first one is that leader-member exchange is derived from social exchange theories, that invites forms of reciprocation behaviors to one another. The second justification is that it fosters the intention of employees to stay, so that the turnover rates are lower. High levels of leader-member exchange quality make the employees comfortable in that working environment and encourage people to stay.

Overall, it has been explained that LMX is influential in the worker's career path and for career success. Therefore, it will be supposed that the leader member exchange quality will positively influence the relationship between a proactive personality and the engagement in career self-management behaviors. The fifth hypothesis can be presented.

H5: Leader-member exchange positively moderates the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behavior, so that as leader-member exchange quality increases the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors becomes stronger.

To conclude, the final hypothesis assumes that all the constructs presented in this chapter are associated to one another, so that proactive personality and job satisfaction are mediated by career self-management behaviors, with the help of the leader member exchange quality that for high levels might strengthen the relationship. In the following chapters all the hypotheses will be tested and the results presented.

H6: The relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction is mediated by career self-management behaviors and this relationship can change based on different levels of leader-member exchange quality, for which higher levels of leader-member exchange quality strengthen the above relationship.

3. Method

3.1 Sample and Procedure

The target of this study were participants, older than 18 years old, who have been working at least once in their life. This was important as participants had to answer questions regarding their work, the behaviors they carried out, the relationship with their supervisor and the level of satisfaction they have been achieving at work. The sample of this study was equal to 199, recruited through snowball sampling. Participants were 56,6% of women, 41,9% of male and 1,6% gender is unknown. Between them the majority was ethnically white (87,6%), 7,8% were Asians, 0,8% black or African American and the remaining 3,9% preferred not to say. In terms of the level of education, the majority of the sample has obtained a Master's degree (48,1%), the Bachelor's degree was obtained by 33,3%, the PhD from 4,7%, 12,4% concluded high school and the remaining 1,6% was divided between middle school and elementary school. The age range was 21, the minimum, and 61, the maximum, with an average of 35 years old ($M = 35.50$ years, $SD = 13.73$ years). Means and Standard Deviations of descriptive statistics can be seen in Table 1.

The study was reviewed by King's College London Research Ethics Office, who approved it with the Ethical Approval document (Appendix A). In the beginning of the survey, participants were provided with the Information Sheet, stating the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of the information given and how results would have been used (Appendix B). The questionnaire was implemented online with the data collection tool Qualtrics Online Survey Software. The link was sent to participants through WhatsApp, Facebook and LinkedIn to increase the sample size. They were able to open it either with smartphones or with computers. All data collected were anonymous and voluntary given. Additionally, participants could withdraw the study at any time, this is also why some data are missing. The questionnaire is reported in Appendix C of this dissertation. The dataset

has been analyzed for moderated mediation using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 (Hayes, 2013).

	N		Mean	S.D.	Minimum	Maximum
	Valid	Missing				
Age	120	79	35,5	13,728	21	61
Gender	129	70	1,61	0,577	1	4
Ethnicity	129	70	1,43	1,224	1	6
Highest level of education	129	70	4,41	0,853	1	6
Current employment status	129	70	3,65	1,638	1	6
Duration of current job	125	74	2,86	2,078	1	6
Current job position	124	75	2,7	1,481	1	5

Table 1. Means, S.D. of descriptive statistics

3.2 Design and Measures

The present study was developed based on the literature review, delineated in the previous chapter, along with the theorized hypothesis. The model used was a mediated moderation model (Figure 1). The variables used are four. Proactive personality is the independent variable and job satisfaction the dependent variable. Career self-management behavior is the mediator variable, which is expected to positively influence the relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction. Leader-member exchange is the moderator variable, which is supposed to positively influence the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behavior. The questionnaire has been composed based on validated measures for each variable, which increases the possibility of having reliable and accurate measurements. The items are measured with a 5-point Likert scale,

ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, except for the item leader-member exchange, for which it was used a different response scale for each question as it can be seen in Appendix C.
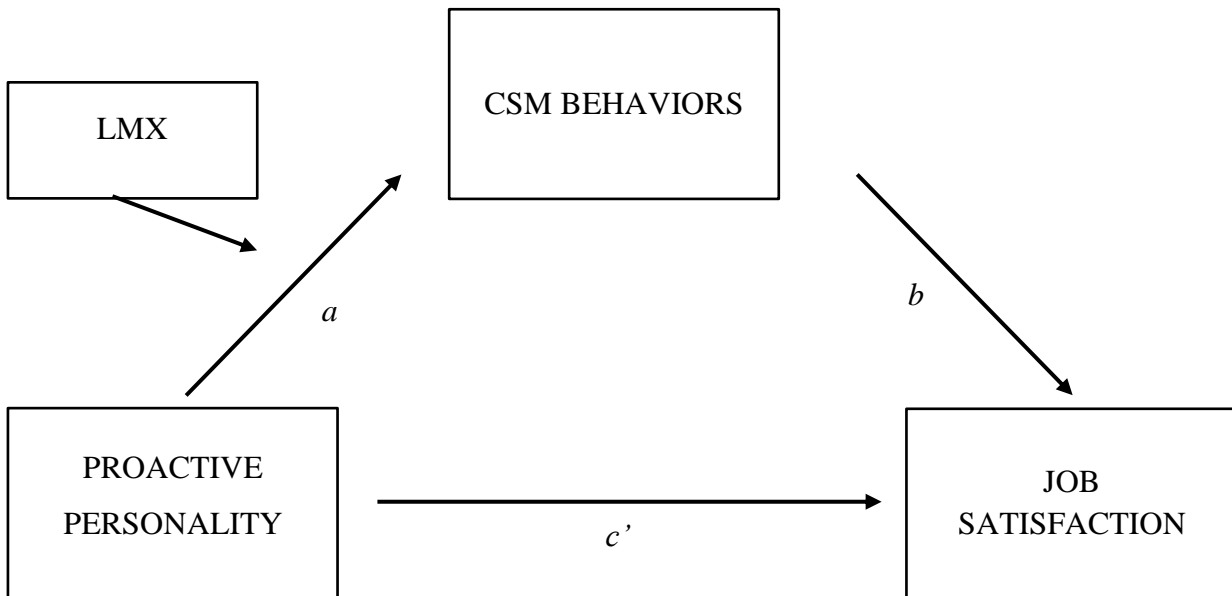

Figure 1. Proposed Model

3.2.1 Independent variable

The independent variable is proactive personality, measured with a validated scale made by Seibert et al. (1999). The scale assesses the level of a specific personal trait, which is being predisposed to engage in proactive behaviors. The total number of items was ten, examples of these are: "Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality" or "I am always looking for better ways to do things". A high score on each item means overall a higher degree of proactivity. The reliability analysis was conducted to test the internal consistency of the scale, using the Cronbach's Alpha test. The acceptable cutoff value assuring the consistency is higher than or equal to 0.70 (Lance, Butts and Michels, 2006). For proactive personality Cronbach's Alpha was equal to 0.839, attesting the reliability of the scale. For all items the corrected item total correlation was above 0.30, which is the limit above which the items demonstrate to have a good correlation with the total score of the scale (Cureton, 1966).

3.2.2 Dependent variable

The dependent variable is job satisfaction. It was measured with a scale ideated by Macdonald and MacIntyre (1997). It determines the level of satisfaction achieved at work. The items are ten in total, including for instance "I feel good about working at this company" and "I feel good about my job". The Cronbach Alpha exceed the commonly cited criteria (0.70) up to 0.852 and the corrected item total correlation exceeds the minimum value.

3.2.3 Mediator variable

The mediator variable is career self-management behaviors. The adopted scale has been developed by Noe (1996) and it analyzes the way in which career strategies are used in order to achieve career goals. The reliability has been measured and it presents a Cronbach's Alpha equal to 0.874. The corrected item total correlation for all items is above the minimum value. Examples of items include: "To what extent do you attempt to interact with influential people in your division or department?" and "To what extent have you taken leadership in work areas where there appeared to be no leadership?". The number of items for this variable is fourteen.

3.2.4 Moderator variable

The moderator variable is leader-member exchange (LMX). There are seven items related to this variable, an example is "To what extent have you tried to develop skills which may be needed to attain your career goal?" (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). The range of response for each item is made of five points, but they all differ from each other. The scale measures the influence of the relationship between the leader and the member in the working environment. Cronbach's Alpha is 0.843 and the corrected item total correlation is below 0.30.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics

For the variables proactive personality, job satisfaction, career self-management behavior and leader-member exchange the mean, standard deviation and bivariate correlation was conducted and those are presented in Table 2. Overall, in the study all variables presented a high level of mean and standard deviation, yet the highest score between the constructs is proactive personality ($M = 3.82$; $SD = 0.55$) and the lowest is for leader-member exchange ($M = 3.43$; $SD = 0.70$).

The correlation analysis was performed with a Pearson correlation test. The four variables analyzed are continuous and normally distributed, presenting a bell shape in the histogram plot (Appendix D.). Correlation coefficient's (r) values show the strength of the relationship, rising from 0 to +1 and from 0 to -1 (Akoglu, 2018). If the correlation presents a value of 0, it means that there is no correlation between the variables, whereas +1 means a perfect positive correlation. According to Cohen (1988, 1992) there should be used these correlations guidelines, that delineate the effect as small, medium and high for values respectively of 0.10, 0.30 and 0.50. As shown in Table 2, all correlations are significant for p-value < 0.01, which signify that there is enough evidence to state that the correlations observed exist in the population. The strongest correlation appears to be between job satisfaction and leader-member exchange ($r = 0.697$, $p < 0.001$), with a high effect, meaning that the stronger the relationship between the leader and the member the more satisfied the worker is. Whereas the lowest correlation is the one between proactive personality and leader-member exchange ($r = 0.259$, $p = 0.002$), which indicates that the more proactive an individual is, the better the relationship with his or her leader, yet with a weak to moderate effect. In terms of the correlation between proactive personality and job satisfaction, they were found to be moderately correlated ($r = 0.344$, $p < 0.001$). Lastly, regarding the dimension career self-management behaviors it has a high effect with the other three variables. In particular, it is strongly correlated with proactive personality ($r = 0.476$, $p < 0.001$),

with leader-member exchange ($r = 0.562$, p < 0.001) and job satisfaction ($r = 0.649$, p < 0.001).

Overall, the correlations of this study are moderate to high correlations and are all positive. These

effects of them are important to consider with the following analysis.

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Age	35,5	13728,	1,										
2 Gender	1,61	,577	-,07	1,									
3 Ethnicity	1,43	1224,	-,169	,107	1,								
4 Highest level of edu.	4,41	,853	-,095	,088	,067	1,							
5 Current employ. status	3,65	1638,	,607**	-,037	-,076	,019	1,						
6 Duration of current job	2,86	2078,	,794**	-,078	-,135	-,156	,522**	1,					
7 Current job position	2,7	1481,	,732**	-,048	-,151	-,016	,538**	,678**	1,				
8 PROPERS	3,823	,55	,077	,073	,152	-,007	-,069	,024	,074	1,			
9 LMX	3,430	,701	,108	,113	,111	-,06	,033	,052	,167	,259**	1,		
10 JOBSAT	3,541	,682	,113	,125	,116	-,126	-,043	,083	,182*	,344**	,697**	1,	
11, CARSTRAT	3,662	,591	,07	,114	,045	-,048	-,03	-,043	,126	,476**	,562**	,649**	1,

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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4.2 Moderated Mediation Analysis

The moderated mediation analysis was performed using SPSS PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013), in order to estimate the direct and indirect effects, the moderator effect, the mediator effect and finally whether a moderated mediation effect was present. The analysis was conducted with the usage of four control variables: age, gender, ethnicity and education. Therefore, the intention was to examine under what circumstances proactive personality influences job satisfaction. In fact, the basic idea of the model being proposed is that the effect of proactive personality on job satisfaction is mediated through career self-management behaviors, but that mediation is moderated by leader member exchange, where leader member exchange is moderating the path between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors.

The study is trying to determine not only whether the mediation is present, but also it is trying to show if the moderator is changing the strength of the relationship of the indirect effect. The moderator leader-member exchange is supposed to positively influence the relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction through career self-management behaviors. The study is willing to test whether higher levels of leader member exchange strengthen the indirect effect from proactive personality to job satisfaction, through career self-management or not.

The foregoing assumptions will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

4.2.1 Direct effects

In the presented model there are three direct effects. The first one concerns the direct relationship between proactive personality and CSM behaviors (*H1*), the second one regards the relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction (*H2*), the third one relates to the influence of CSM behaviors on job satisfaction (*H3*).

Hypothesis 1 predicted a positive association between proactive personality and CSM behaviors. This relationship can be defined as *path a* in the model. It signified that the more incline someone's

personality to be proactive, the higher chances he/she would engage in CSM behaviors. A hierarchical regression analysis has been performed, which proved the impact of proactive personality on CSM behaviors to be significant with a p-value < 0.001 (b = 0.8377, se = 0.2425, t = 3.4542, p = 0.0008). Additionally, the confidence interval (LLCI = 0.3571, ULCI = 1.3183) contained no zero in between, which, according to Hayes (2013), is the most appropriate methodology to confirm the significance of the coefficient. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is being supported, for which a higher level of proactive personality leads to more engagement in CSM behaviors.

The second direct effect is supposed to demonstrate a positive relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction (*H2*), which was defined as *path c'*. The result would be that the more a person would commit to proactive personality, the more probabilities there would be to achieve work satisfaction. In such circumstance, the result of the regression shows that proactive personality has a significant impact on job satisfaction as it does respect the p-value < 0.05 (p = 0.0012) and the confidence interval does not present a zero in between (LLCI = 0.3873, ULCI = 1.5269). Therefore, the coefficient of 0.9571 (se = 0.2875, t = 3.3289) must be taken into consideration as it is significant. Hence, hypothesis 2 supports the concept that having a more productive personality consequently makes you more satisfied with your own job. The findings of H1 and H2 can be found in the following pages in Table 5.

The third and last direct effect present in the model is the one between CSM behaviors and job satisfaction (*H3*), which was delineated as *path b* in the model. The relationship was highly significant with a coefficient of 0.7134 (se = 0.0897, t = 7.9504), a p-value of less than 0.001 and confidence intervals in line with the theorized values (LLCI = 0.5356, ULCI = 0.8912). Therefore, in this instance hypothesis 3 is supported, which means that the more employees undertake behaviors aimed at improving their career, the more satisfied they will be with their work life context.

4.2.2 Mediating Effect

The mediation effect has been a topic of discussion in the past years. Baron and Kenny (1986) have ideated a test, formed by criteria, to comprehend whether the independent variable would affect the dependent variable, through a mediating variable. The three criteria that are required to be met are: firstly the independent variable should vary as much as causing variations in the mediator; secondly variations in the mediator are supposed to cause variations in the dependent variable; thirdly "when Paths a and b are controlled, a previously significant relation between the independent and dependent variables is no longer significant, with the strongest demonstration of mediation occurring when Path c is zero", which implicitly state that there should be a significant direct path between the independent and the dependent variable. In this case, as reported in the correlation matrix in the previous chapter (4.1), the correlation between proactive personality and job satisfaction is significant, yet with a moderated correlation of 0.344. However, the regression analysis performed indicates that the direct relationship between the two variables is not significant (b = -0.0033, se = 0.0983, t = -0.0335), as the p-value is equal to 0.9733, exceeding the value of 0.05, and the bootstrap confidence interval comprehends a zero (LLCI = 0.1981, ULCI = 0.1915). Therefore, according to Baron and Kenny (1986), the mediation test cannot be executed. Nevertheless, Zhao, Lynch and Chen (2010) have revised the methodology of Baron and Kenny (1986) finding out that the mediation test can still be actuated even if there is no direct effect between the variables. Hence, in this study mediation can still be researched. The next step is to verify the effect through CSM behaviors, which has been found to have a strong significance (b = 0.7134, se = 0.0897, t = 7.9504, p < 0.001, LLCI = 0.5356, ULCI = 0.8912). This means that if two people differ from one unit of proactive personality, they are expected to differ of 0.7134 of job satisfaction, due to the impact of career self-management behaviors. The overall model can explain a 45.18% variance (R^2 = 0.4518, F = 15.2446) on job satisfaction, significant for a p-value < 0.001. Table 3 summarizes the presented findings.

Outcome variable:							
JOBSAT							
Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	0.6721	0.4518	0.2655	15.2446	6.0000	111.0000	0.0000
Model							
Variable		Coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant		.9596	.4749	2.0205	.0457	.0185	1.9007
PROPERS		-.0033	.0983	-.0335	.9733	-.1981	.1915
CARSTRAT		.7134	.0897	7.9504	.0000	.5356	.8912
AGE		.0040	.0036	1.1283	.2616	-.0030	.0111
GEN		.0741	.0830	.8939	.3738	-.0903	.2385
ETH		.0563	.0408	1.3825	.1696	-.0244	.1371
EDU		-.0839	.0564	-1.4863	.1400	-.1957	.0280

Table 3. Data report for mediating effect

Finally, the indirect effect can be presented. In Table 4, the finding suggests that at lower levels of LMX (2.7200) the effect is 0.3001 and significant (BootLLCI = 0.0624, BootULCI = 0.4428), at average levels of LMX (3.5714) the indirect effect is significant and equal to 0.2070 (BootLLCI = 0.0603, BootULCI = 0.3543). Whereas at higher levels of LMX (4.1419) the effect (0.1445) is not significant (BootLLCI = -0.0232, BootULCI = 0.3278).

LMX	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
2.7200	0.3001	0.0913	0.0624	0.4428
3.5714	0.2070	0.0744	0.0603	0.3543
4.1429	0.1445	0.0902	-0.0232	0.3278

Table 4. Indirect Effect

Overall, only the indirect effect is significant, so it can be stated that there is a full mediation effect (Zhao, Lynch and Chen, 2010), for which as the moderator increased the effect decreases to a point in which it is not significant. Therefore, the fourth assumption is supported (*H4*), meaning that job

satisfaction is influenced by proactive personality, through the interaction of career self-management behaviors.

4.2.3 Moderation Effect

The moderation effect occurs when the interaction between the predictor variable, in this case proactive personality, and the outcome variable, in this case CSM behaviors, varies along with the increase or decrease of another variable, which is called moderator, which in this study is leader-member exchange (Marsh et al., 2013). It was supposed, by the fifth hypothesis (*H5*), that the construct leader-member exchange would strengthen the relationship between proactive personality and CSM behaviors. As a matter of fact, the study result showed a significant interaction effect among proactive personality and CSM behaviors, by LMX with $p < 0.05$ (b = -0.1533, t = -2.0498, p = 0.0428). The confidence interval also proved the significance of the effect with a lower level confidence interval of -0.3016 and an upper level confidence interval of -0.0051. Moreover, the relationship between LMX and CSM behaviors is significant, with a coefficient of 0.9571 (se = 0.2875, t = 3.3289, p = 0.0012). Finally. the data exhibited a 43.00% (R^2 = 0.4300, F = 11.8560) variance change in the criterion variable interaction, with a p-value < 0.001. The following Table 5 summarizes the data reported.

Outcome variable:

CARSTRAT

Model Summary

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	0,6558	0,4300	0,2201	11,8560	7,0000	110,0000	0,0000

Model

Variable	Coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-,9395	1,0086	-,9315	,3536	-2,9384	1,0593
PROPERS	,8377	,2425	3,4542	,0008	,3571	1,3183
LMX	,9571	,2875	3,3289	,0012	,3873	1,5269
Int_1	-,1533	,0748	-2,0498	,0428	-,3016	-,0051
AGE	,0015	,0034	,4402	,6606	-,0052	,0082
GEN	,0330	,0758	,4357	,6639	-,1172	,1833
ETH	-,0236	,0372	-,6345	,5271	-,0973	,0501
EDU	,0130	,0524	,2485	,8042	-,0909	,1170

Table 5. Data report for moderation effect

Overall, it can be stated that the moderation effect is present in the model and consistent with the hypothesis (*H5*). To further analyze this process, the conditional coefficient of the focal predictor for the *a path* can be taken into consideration. The results show that at lower levels of LMX (2.7200) the effect is significant (b = 0.4207, se = 0.0861, t = 4.8847, $p < 0.001$), then for LMX equal to 3.5714 the effect is still significant (b = 0.2901, se = 0.0913, t = 3.1768, p = 0.0019), yet as LMX increases (4.1429) the effect is reduced by more than 50% and it is not significant anymore (b = 0.2025, se = 0.1162, t = 1.7423, p = 0.0842). This evidence can be seen also in Table 6.

LMX	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
2,7200	,4207	,0861	4,8847	,0000	,2500	,5913
3,5714	,2901	,0913	3,1768	,0019	,1091	,4711
4,1429	,2025	,1162	1,7423	,0842	-,0278	,4329

Table 6. Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator

This means that as for lower levels of LMX, it positively moderates the effect between proactive personality and CSM behaviors, yet as the construct arises there is a point in which it is not beneficial anymore. As it can be seen in Figure 2, for lower levels of leader-member exchange, as the level of proactive personality increases the engagement in career self-management behaviors increases of a consistent amount, there is a steeper gradient. Therefore, the impact of proactive personality on career self-management behaviors is much stronger at low levels of leader-member exchange. Whereas, for higher levels of leader-member exchange the line tends to straighten, which shows that there is not a similar change as before between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors. In fact, as proactive personality increases the willingness to engage in career self-management behaviors increases of a far lower amount.
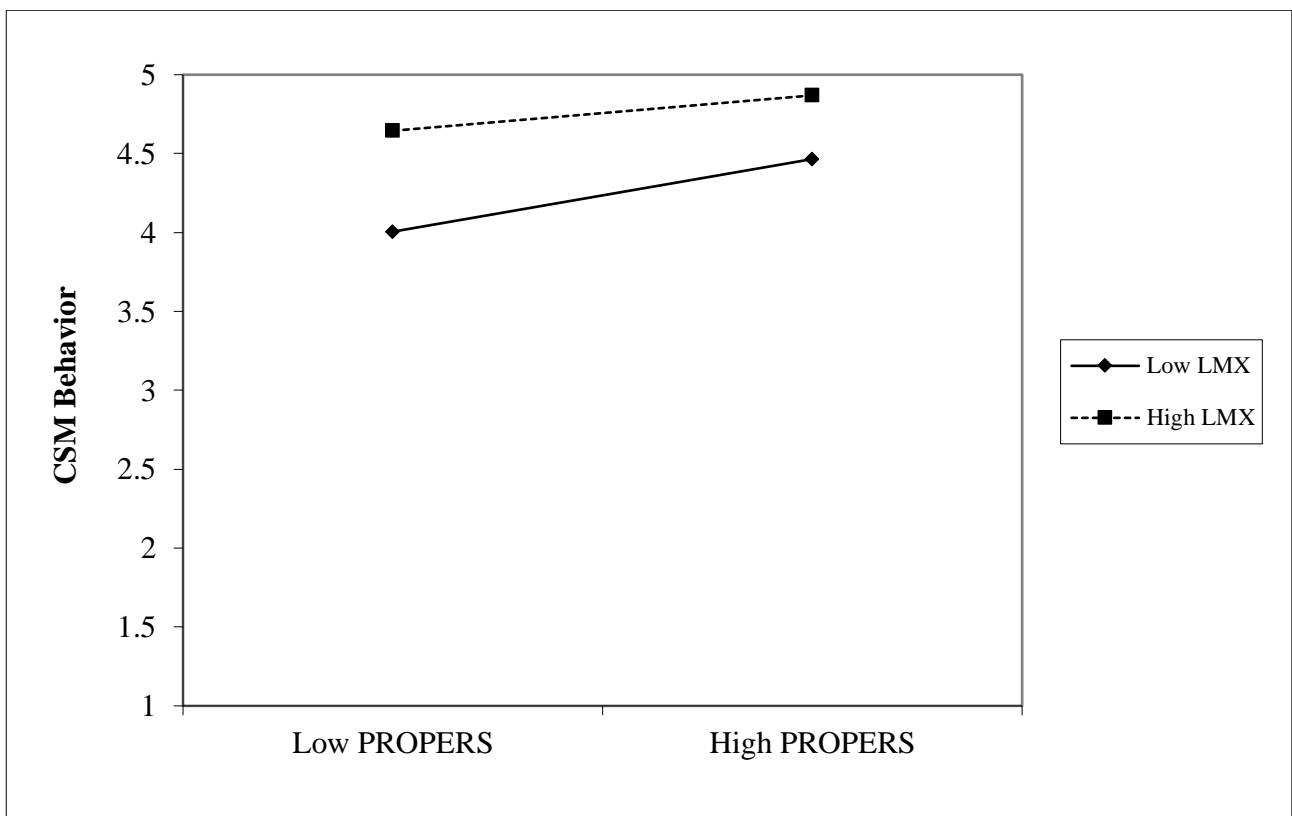

Figure 2. Interaction effect of proactive personality and leader member exchange on career self-management behaviors

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4.2.4 Moderated mediation

Finally, to analyze moderated mediation the index of moderated mediation should be accounted for (Hayes, 2015). Moderation and mediation effects were both present in the examined model, therefore it is possible to analyze moderated mediation. The index of moderated mediation has been utilized to test the significance level of moderated mediation, which corresponds to "the difference of the indirect effects across levels of need for cognition" (Hayes, 2015). In the present study, the regression analysis showed an index equal to -0.1094, yet it is not significant, as there is a zero present in the bootstrapping confidence interval (BootLLCI = -0.2249, BootULCI = 0.0848), as shown in Table 7.

Moreover, hypothesis 6 supposed that for higher levels of leader-member exchange quality, the mediating impact between proactive personality and job satisfaction through career self-management would be strengthened. Yet, this may be analyzed by checking the corresponding values as the values of the moderator increase. Table 4 suggested that as the values of LMX increase the effect diminishes: for LMX = 2.7200 there is an effect of b = 0.4207 (LLCI = 0.2500, ULCI = 0.5913), for LMX = 3.5714 the effect lessens to 0.2901 (LLCI = 0.1091, ULCI = 0.4711), whereas for LMX = 4.1429 the effect is not significant (b = 0.2025, LLCI = -0.0278, ULCI = 0.4329).

Therefore, it can be stated that the sixth hypothesis (*H6*) is not supported, as the relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction is mediated by career self-management behavior and it is moderated by leader-member exchange, though the combined effect is not present.

Index of moderated mediation:				
	Index	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
LMX	-0,1094	0,0743	-0,2249	0,0848

Table 7. Index of moderated mediation

5. Discussion

In the following sections the final considerations of the study will be outlined. This chapter will link the literature with the findings of the study and draw on the final conclusions.

This research aimed at identifying the factors that could impact on the aspect of career self-management. In particular the main research topic was whether proactive personality would positively influence career self-management, if leader-member exchange would impact that relationship and finally whether that relationship would lead to job satisfaction. The research was carried out using a quantitative approach, through an online survey using the tool Qualtrics Online Survey Software. Data were then analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 (Hayes, 2013). All the hypothesis presented in Chapter 2 were then tested and the results were reported in Chapter 4.

The overall results of the analysis are useful to demonstrate implications for the theoretical component, as most of the hypothesis have been confirmed.

The statistical analysis confirmed the existence of the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors, through the first hypothesis, which was statistically supported. This association means that greater levels of proactive personality positively impact the engagement in career self-management behaviors. As anticipated before, the literature provided evidence that proactive personality is linked to multiple organizational factors. In particular career success appears to be one of the factors with the stronger relationship with proactive personality (Seibert, Crant and Kraimer, 1999). In fact, personality characteristics enable the worker to participate in a certain way to the working environment, impacting on the willingness to pursue specific career goals in order to achieve career success. The disposition towards your own career and the proactivity to improve it are two predictors of career self-management behaviors. As it was highlighted before, other authors had

already proved the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management (Srikanth, 2012; Yu et al., 2021). Thereby, this study confirmed previous theoretical findings.

Moreover, this research highlighted the fact that leader member exchange quality moderates the connection between proactive personality and career self-management. In such a way that the better quality of leader-member exchange positively influence, or makes stronger, the impact of proactive personality on career self-management. Therefore, employees that have a greater relationship with their leaders and that possess a proactive personality do more easily engage in career self-management behaviors than employees that do not possess a strong proactive personality or have a bad relationship with their leader. Previous studies looked at the effects of leader member exchange, analyzing the fact that different quality of leader member exchange, which can be distinguished into high and low, reflect into different behaviors of the workers (Breland et al., 2007). Moreover, other findings suggested that leader-member exchange would positively influence career success, as better quality improves the workers behavior, foster support and provide useful resources (Erdogan et al., 2004). The direct link between leader-member exchange and career self-management has been delineated, signifying that there are multiple reasons, such as the connection with social exchange theory and the encouragement to stay in the company (Sturges et al., 2010).

The study predicted that the favorable impact of proactive personality on career self-management would have been enhanced by high quality leader-member exchange. This was delineated in hypothesis 5 and supported by the findings from the data. This result is an important contribution for the present literature, as the connection between these three constructs was not researched before. This suggests that the more someone is engaged in proactive personality, the more this will induce them to embark on career self-management behaviors, aimed at improving their own work life for the best achievement of their career goals. Additionally, the better quality relationship with their supervisor, the more they will be encouraged to look out for better opportunities and useful resources.

An additional contribution of this study regarded job satisfaction. It was found that proactive personality is indirectly associated with job satisfaction, by a moderation of career self-management. The assumptions of this study regarding job satisfaction were two. The first one concerned the relationship between career self-management and hob satisfaction (H3), which was supported. Jung and Takeuchi (2018) had already verified the association between career and job satisfaction, in such a way that feelings of job satisfaction were connected to career and in particular to career success, confirming that the individual is the main contributor to the success of their own career path. Additionally, job satisfaction was linked to the achievement of career goals, because being satisfied and pleased or not with your current job enables workers to understand which route to undertake (Adekola, 2011). The second finding was about the positive relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction (H2), which resulted in confirming the previous theoretical assumptions of the literature. In fact, several research have defended the interaction between the above constructs, studying that proactive personality positively influence feelings of job satisfaction, as personal characteristics as extraversion tend to make workers more engaged and intended to strive to achieve greeter results and career goals (Li et al., 2010; Franek and Vecera, 2008; Li et al., 2010; Ng et al., 2005; Li et al, 2017).

The final presumption of this present study was that there is a connection between the four construct presented. Thereby, hypothesis six presumed that the relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction would have been mediated by career self-management behaviors and that greater degrees of leader-member exchange quality would positively impact the previous relationship. This hypothesis reflected the research question of the present study, by the reason of the fact that there was no study reporting these whole connections. Yet, the hypothesis was not supported by the data gathered. This finding would have been key to the enrichment of the literature. In the following paragraphs the main limitations and final conclusions will be outlined.

5.1 Limitations and future research

The limitations of this study can be highlighted in this paragraph. First of all, the sample of this study was equal to 199 respondents, yet not all of them completed all the survey, even though the statistical software SPSS used to analyze the data eliminated the uncompleted responses. The sample was then too small to generalize the findings to the whole population and some responses were missing. Therefore, if a similar study will be conducted in the future the sample taken into consideration should be greater. Additionally, the responses were collected through snowball sampling, which enabled to reach a greater number of people, yet it may encounter the problem of under sampling some ethnicities. For instance, in this case 87,6% of the population was ethnically white, which resulted in a disproportion of the overall population. Thereby, in future studies greater attention on this matter should be posed and a more equal sample of ethnicities taken into consideration. Finally, the questionnaire was self reported. Self reporting may encounter the issue of honesty of the respondent, which sometimes are not truthful overall.

5.2 Conclusion

The present research aimed at understanding better the concept of career self-management. In particular, the specific research topic was whether proactive personality and leader-member exchange would impact career self-management in such a way that it would leader to job satisfaction. The results of the analysis presented interesting findings as proactive personality and leader-member exchange were positively connected to career self-management. Moreover, it was found that career self-management behaviors would foster job satisfaction. Though, there was no support for the connection of all the constructs. Therefore, it has been suggested how to implement another research based on the present model, but with some improvements.

Finally, this study contributed to the present literature confirming some of the influences already studied and creating a new influential model to be better developed in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Ethical approval

Research Ethics Office

Franklin Wilkins Building
5.9 Waterloo Bridge Wing
Waterloo Road
London SE1 9NH
Telephone 020 7848 4020/4070/4077
reo@kcl.ac.uk

KING'S College LONDON

15/06/2022

Giulia Saggiorato

Dear Giulia

Career self-management: the influence of proactive personality and leader-member exchange.

Thank you for submitting your Minimal Risk Self-Registration Form. This letter acknowledges confirmation of your registration; your registration confirmation reference number is MRSU-21/22-32409

Important COVID-19 update: Please consult the latest College guidance (linked below) and ensure you have completed the risk assessment procedure prior to any data collection involving face-to-face participant interactions.

https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/governance-ethics-integrity/research-ethics/applications/covid-19-update-for-researchers

Ethical Clearance

Ethical clearance for this project is granted. However, the clearance outlined in the attached letter is contingent on your adherence to the latest College measures when conducting your research. Please do not commence data collection until you have carefully reviewed the update and made any necessary project changes.

Ethical clearance is granted for a period of **one year** from today's date and you may now commence data collection. However, it is important that you have read through the information provided below before commencing data collection:

As the Minimal Risk Registration Process is based on self-registration, your form has not been reviewed by the College Research Ethics Committee. It is therefore your responsibility to ensure that your project adheres to the Minimal Risk Guiding Principles **and the agreed protocol does not fall outside of the criteria for Minimal Risk Registration. Your project may be subject to audit by the College Research Ethics Committee and any instances in which the registration process is deemed to have been used inappropriately will be handled as a breach of good practice and investigated accordingly.**

Record Keeping:

Please be sure to keep a record of your registration number and include it in any materials associated with this research. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that any other permissions or approvals (i.e. R&D, gatekeepers, etc.) relevant to their research are in place, prior to conducting the research.

In addition, you are expected to keep records of your process of informed consent and the dates and relevant details of research covered by this application. For example, depending on the type of research that you are doing, you might keep:

- A record record of all data collected and all mechanisms of disseminated results.
- Documentation of your informed consent process. This may include written information sheets or in cases where it is not appropriate to provide written information, the verbal script, or introductory material provided at the start of an online survey.
  Please note: For projects involving the use of an Information Sheet and Consent Form for recruitment purposes, please ensure that you use the KCL GDPR compliant Information Sheet & Consent Form Templates
- Where appropriate, records of consent, e.g. copies of signed consent forms or emails where participants agree to be interviewed.

Audit:

You may be selected for an audit, to see how researchers are implementing this process. If audited, you and your Supervisor will be asked to attend a short meeting where you will be expected to explain how your research meets the eligibility criteria of the minimal risk process and how the project abides by the general principles of ethical research. In particular, you will be expected to provide a general summary of your review of the possible risks involved in your research, as well as to provide basic research records (as above in Record Keeping) and to describe the process by which participants agreed to participate in your research.

Remember that if you at any point have any questions about the ethical conduct of your research, or believe you may have gained the incorrect level of ethical clearance, please contact your supervisor or the Research Ethics Office.

Data Protection Registration

If you indicated in your minimal risk registration form that personal data would be processed as part of this research project, this letter also confirms that you have also met your requirements for registering this processing activity with King's College London in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

More information about how the UK GDPR affects researchers can be found here: https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/governance-ethics-integrity/research-governance-office/data-protection-law-and-research/how-does-uk-dp-law-affect-research

Please note that any changes to the storage, management, or type of personal data being collected should also be included in a modification request.

We wish you every success with your project moving forward.

With best wishes,

The Research Ethics Office

On behalf of the College Research Ethics Committee

Appendix B. Information sheet

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: **MRSU-21/22-32409**

Title of study

Career self-management: the influence of proactive personality and leader-member exchange.

Invitation Paragraph

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project which forms part of my Master's dissertation. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to analyze the effects of proactive personality and leader-member exchange on career self-management. Moreover, the final intention is to look at the influence of the above factors on job satisfaction.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You are being invited to participate in this study via snowball sampling and you have met the below inclusion criteria for participation:

- Being or having been a worker
- Being older than 18 years old

What will happen if I take part?

If you agree to take part you will complete a survey anonymously. The survey will ask you questions about proactive personality, career engagement, leader-member exchange and job satisfaction. The survey will take you approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is completely voluntary. You should only take part if you want to and choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in anyway. If you choose to take part you will be asked to provide your consent. To do this you will be asked to indicate that you have read and understand the information provided and that you consent to your anonymous data being used for the purposes explained.

You are free to withdraw at any point during completion of the survey, without having to give a reason. You could withdraw by simply exiting the survey before submission. Withdrawing from the study will not affect you in any way. Once you submit the survey, it will no longer be possible to withdraw from the study because the data will be fully anonymous. Please do not include any personal identifiable information in your responses.

Data handling and confidentiality

This research is anonymous. This means that nobody, including the researchers, will be aware of your identity, and that nobody will be able to connect you to the answers you provide, even indirectly. Your answers will nevertheless be treated confidentially and the information you provide will not allow you to be identified in any research outputs/publications. Your data will be held securely in my personal laptop that is encrypted and password protected.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will be summarized in in my dissertation. The anonymous data set will not be shared with any third parties.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details:

Name: Giulia Saggiorato
KCL email address: giulia.saggiorato@kcl.ac.uk

What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?

If this study has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study you can contact King's College London using the details below for further advice and information:

Supervisor name: Ricardo Rodrigues
Supervisor's email address: ricardo.rodrigues@kcl.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research.

Appendix C. Questionnaire

Proactive personality (Seibert et al., 1999) with 5-point Likert scale

1. I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.

2. Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.

3. Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.

4. If I see something I don't like, I fix it.

5. No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.

6. I love being a champion for my ides, even against others' opposition.

7. I excel at identifying opportunities.

8. I am always looking for better ways to do things.

9. If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.

10. I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.

LMX (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995)

1. Do you know where you stand with your leader .. do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do? (Does your member usually know)

    1. Rarely   2. Occasionally   3. Sometimes 4. Fairly Often 5. Very Often

1. How well does your leader understand your job problems and needs? (How well do you understand)

    1. Not a Bit   2. A Little   3. A Fair Amount   4. Quite a Bit 5. A Great Deal

11. How well does your leader recognize your potential? (How well do you recognize)

    1. Not at All   2. A Little   3. Moderately 4. Mostly   5. Fully

12. Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/ her position, what are the chances that your leader would use his/ her power to help you solve problems in your work? (What are the changes that you would)

    1. None   2. Small   3. Moderate   4. High   5. Very High

13. Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your leader has, what are the chances that he/she would "bail you out," at his/ her expense? (What are the chances that you would)

    1. None   2. Small   3. Moderate   4. High   5. Very High

14. I have enough confidence in my leader that I would defend and justify his/ her decision if he/she were not present to do so? (Your member would)

    1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

15. How would you characterize your working reltionship with your leader? (Your member)

    1. Extremely Ineffective 2. Worse Than Average   3. Average   4. Better Than Average
        5. Extremely Effective

Job satisfaction (Macdonald and MacIntyre, 1997) with 5-point Likert scale

1. I receive recognition for a job well done

2. I feel close to the people at work

3. I feel good about working at this company

4. I feel secure about my job

5. I believe management is concerned about me

6. On the whole I believe work is good for my physical health

7. My wages are good

8. All my talents and skills are used at work

9. I get along with my supervisors

10. I feel good about my job

Career strategy scale (Noe, 1996) with 5-point Likert scale

1. To what extent have you built a network of contacts within the division for obtaining information about events, changes, or activities within the division?

2. To what extent have you built a network of friendships in the division which could help further your career progression?

3. To what extent do you have friendships with individuals who perform different kinds of work that you do for the division?

4. To what extent do you attempt to interact with influential people in your division or department?

5. To what extent have you tried to develop skills which may be needed to attain your career goal?

6. To what extent have you taken leadership in work areas where there appeared to be no leadership?

7. To what extent have you tried to develop skills and expertise in areas that are critical to your unit's operation?

8. Do you make your supervisor aware of your accomplishments?

9. Have you made your supervisor aware of the job assignments you want?

10. Have you made your supervisor aware of your aspirations and career objectives?

11. Have you asked your supervisor for career guidance?

12. Have you sought career guidance from other experienced persons in the division?

13. Have you sought career guidance from a more experienced person outside the division?

14. Do you believe that discussing your career interests with others will benefit you?

Age

Gender

      1. Male   2. Female

What is your ethnicity?

1. White   2. Mixed/multiple ethnic groups   3. Asian/Asian British 4.

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British   5. Other ethnic group

Highest level of education

1. Elementary school   2. Middle school   3. High school   4. Bachelor's degree 5.

Master's degree   6. Doctorate/PhD

Current employment status

1. Student   *2. S*tudent and current worker   *3.* Unemployed   *4.* Self-employed

5. Employed   *6.* Retired

Duration of your current job

1. Less than 1 year   *2.* 1-2 years   *3.* 2-5 years   *4.* 5-10 years   5. 10-15 years 6. +15

years

Current job position

1. Intern   *2.* Non-supervisory   *3.* Supervisor   *4.* Middle management   *5.*

Top management

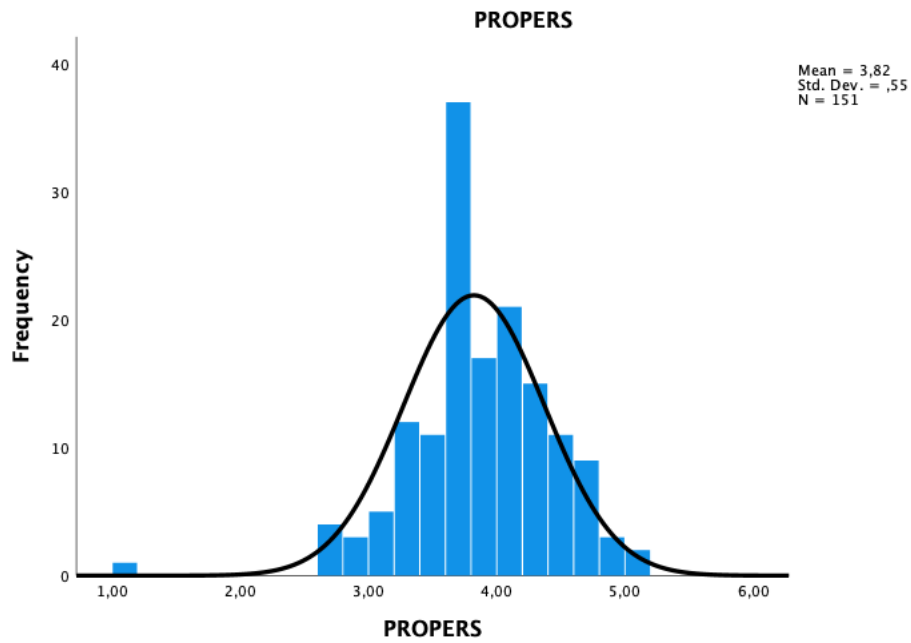# Appendix D. Bell Shape Histogram

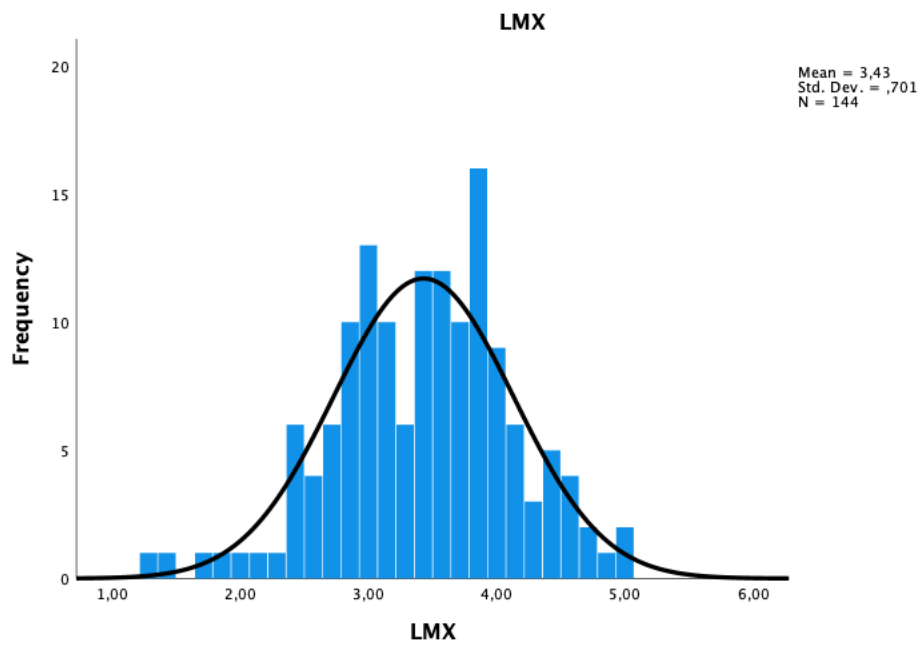*Figure 3.A.* Bell shape histogram of proactive personality

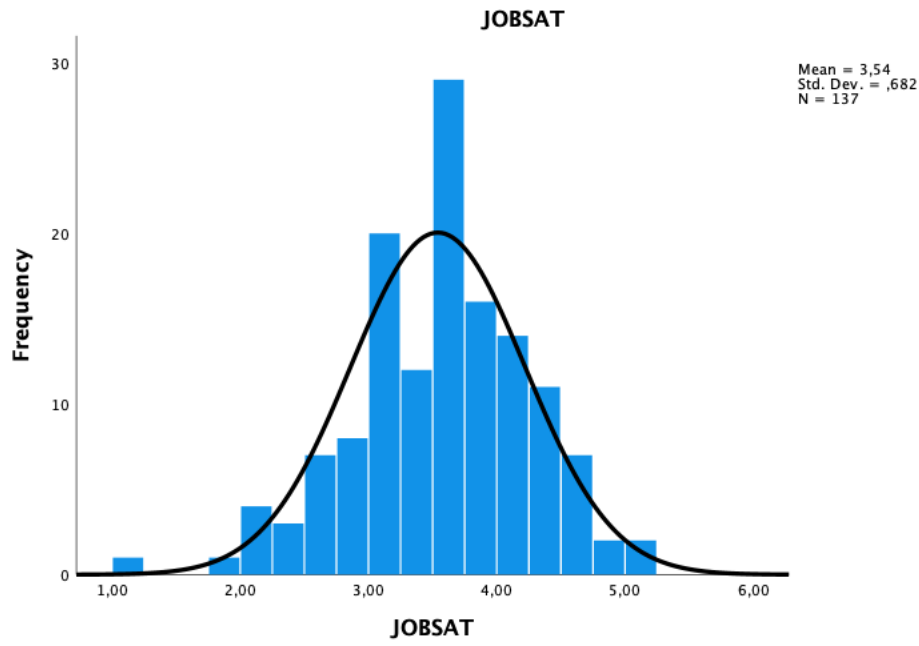*Figure 4.A.* Bell shape histogram of leader-member exchange
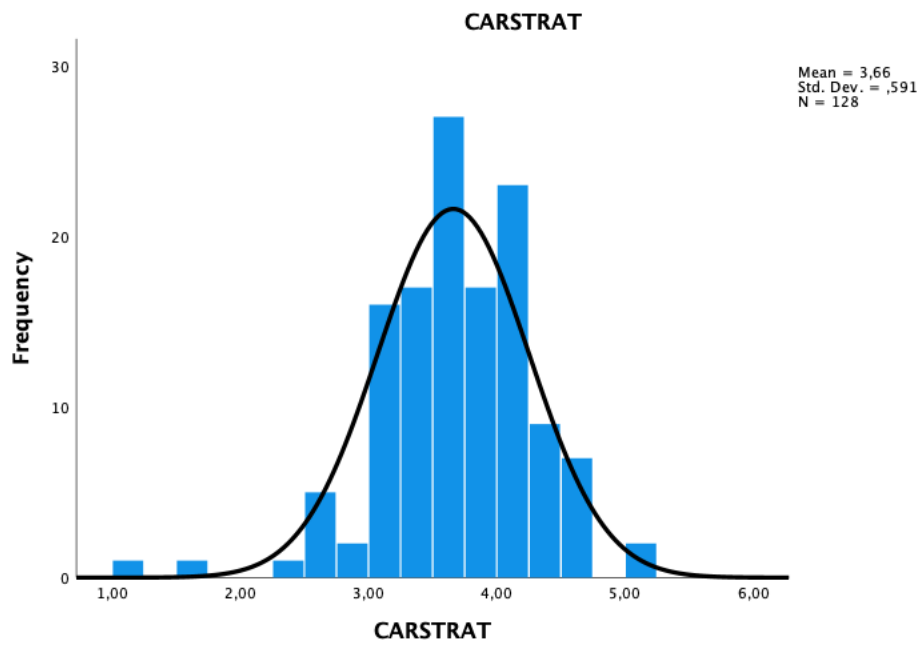
Figure 5.A. Bell shape histogram job satisfaction

Figure 6.A. Bell shape histogram career self-management behavior

SUMMARY

1. Introduction

Work has always been seen as a source of identity, as a status for the social context, therefore career development and progressions are a "major life constituency" (Baruch, 2003). In the past organizations were the main players for managing worker's careers, yet today this concept has evolved, and employees are seen as the fundamental contributors to their career development (Baruch, 2002). In this context, the idea of career self-management has been introduced. It summarizes the dynamic process of the employee toward the proactive execution of a series of co-occurring behaviors that are aimed at improving its own career (King, 2004; Lent and Brown, 2013). In the literature there has been no evidence or research on the dual influence of the personal factor proactive personality and work factor leader-member exchange on career self-management. Consequently, the present study has the aim to investigate the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors, considering whether leader-member exchange moderates this effect. Finally, the study will explore the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management on job satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

The second chapter of this dissertation describes the literature of the main construct of the thesis.

The primary construct to describe is career self-management, which has two views. The first one refers to King (2004), who conceptualizes CSM as an ongoing process, made of proactive career behaviors. King (2004) has argued that career self-management can be depicted starting from the model of vocational adjustment made by Crites (1969), which describes the process to achieve job satisfaction. The main assumption of King's framework is that employees do not have the power and capability to control all the factors of their career. Whether the conditions leading to CSM have been reached or not, it may drive to career and life satisfaction, or if the consequences are repeatedly

negative over time, it may lead to loss of control, conflict and demotivation, which may result for the author in learned helplessness. Additionally, King (2001) theorized that there is no single or stand-alone behavior, but each behavior is co-occurring and interconnected.

The second view has been designed by Lent and Brown (2013). They have identified multiple challenges in today's working environment that employees have to face. Overall, CSM is defined as a proactive mechanism to foster adaptation to these challenges, based on social cognitive career theory's (SCCT) existing model. The basic assumption is that employees have the possibility to implement the mechanisms of agency, yet not everything is in their control. Therefore, the author has introduced the term adaptive career behaviors, which are defined as "behaviors that people employ to help direct their own career (and educational) development" (Lent and Brown, 2013), especially ones that can be learnt. They can be clustered into two groups: developmental tasks and coping skills. Additionally, the model identifies the predictors of CSM as proximal and distal antecedents. What follows is an account of the specific behaviors that exemplify the core construct.

There are four types of career self-management behaviors that have been found to be successful: career planning; skill development, consultation behaviors and networking behaviors (Claes and Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1998). Additionally, King (2004) has identified three complementary behaviors that encourage career self-management: positioning behaviors, influence behaviors and boundary management. Furthermore, Lent and Brown (2013) have delineated adaptive career behaviors. Further examples of these approaches are investments in human capital, networking, career planning and managing the boundaries between work and nonwork. Additionally, voice, taking charge and voluntarily skill behavior have been identified as other samples of impactful behaviors (Lent et al., 2022). Career self-management behaviors (CSMB) will be the main research topic in this study.

The secondary construct is proactive personality, defined by Bateman and Crant (1993) as the tendency to enact or change someone's environment and later on as "taking initiative in improving current circumstances or creating new ones; it involves challenging the status quo rather than

passively adapting to present conditions" (Crant, 2000). In fact, a proactive person is someone who is not limited by situational forces, though is ready to effect environmental change. It has usually been viewed as a personal disposition, yet Bateman and Crant (1993) have demonstrated that it is different from other common personality traits. There has been a substantial interest and evidence in the relation between proactive personality and the working environment, specific attention has been given to career success (Seibert, Crant and Kraimer, 1999; Crant, 2000), which is defined as the "accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur, Khapova and Wilderom, 2005). Nowadays, employees are the ultimate responsible of their career success and it is, therefore, for them to decide what are the best career options to choose and what career plan to follow (Seibert, Crant and Kraimer, 2001). In this regard, career self-management refers to the resourcefulness employees show in relation to managing their own work life (De Vos and Soens, 2008). Hence, there is a direct connection between managing your own career and trying to achieve the goal of career success. Therefore, it may be supposed that the more an individual is inclined to have a proactive personality the more incline they will be to engage in career self-management behaviors. In this view, the first testable hypothesis can be presented.

H1: Proactive personality is positively associated with career self-management behaviors.

The third construct is job satisfaction. Hoppock (1935) had described it as the combination of phycological states, impacted by several external elements, that lead the individual to have feelings towards their work. Whereas Vroom (1964) concentrates its attention on the employee and its motivation to work, thereby satisfaction is described as the positive tendency towards a specific job. Spector defines job satisfaction as "the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs" (1997). This suggests that job satisfaction is a global affective reaction, positive or negative, that individuals hold about their job. Moreover, it has been researched in relation to other components that regard work, such as job performance (Christen, Iyer and Soberman, 2006),

employee turnover (Ying-Chang et al., 2010), manager's concern, job design, working conditions, social relations and opportunities (Rue and Byaes, 2003).

Researchers have been studying the effect between proactive personality and job satisfaction (Ng et al., 2005; Li et al., 2017). In fact, there is evidence indicating that proactive people perform actions that will lead to greater job satisfaction, as it tends to generate advantageous situations (Li et al., 2010; Ng et al., 2005). Therefore, it can be assumed that higher levels of proactive personality may lead to higher levels of satisfaction with one's job.

H2: Proactive personality is positively associated with job satisfaction.

Additionally, Jung and Takeuchi (2018) have studied the relation between satisfaction and career. It has been defined that job satisfaction is a key factor for career success, focusing on the concept of the individual at the center of their own career development. As a matter of fact, career self-management behaviors enhance the achievement of career goals and career satisfaction, as workers are the final architects of their career. Moreover, job satisfaction is a fundamental element for career development as the process of being inclined or not towards a particular type of employment enables the person to take the right direction towards their final career goal (Adekola, 2011). In line with the presented findings, the importance of satisfaction related to work and, in a bigger picture, to the overall career can be confirmed. Hence, it may be supposed that the more someone engages in the development of their own career with a profound intention to achieve goals the more satisfied they will be.

H3: Career self-management behaviors are positively correlated with job satisfaction.

Furthermore, it can be assumed that the positive relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction is mediated by career self-management behaviors, so that the more someone that has a proactive personality engages in career self-management behavior the easier they will attain job satisfaction.

__H4:__ The positive relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction is mediated by career self-management behaviors.

The final construct is leader-member exchange theory (LMX), developed by Graen and Scandura in the 1970s and summed up by Erdogan, Berrin and Bauer, Talya (2015), focusing on the relationship between the manager and the members of its team. The basic assumption of LMX, from social exchange theory, is that leaders are influential, so that the quality of the relationship they build with their team members impacts the overall group. Leaders share valuable resources, support team members and provide them with benefits, while members are willing to reciprocate with loyalty and good performance. This mechanism usually fosters better work outcomes. Liden et al. (1993) have shown that the LMX pattern starts to form very early in the relationship and is maintained throughout it. Additionally, leader member exchange quality has an effect on career success, as leaders do not engage in the same way with all workers, there are high quality levels and low ones (Breland et al., 2007). This enables the formation of two main groups: the in-group, which will most easily achieve career success and the out-group which will have more difficulties. Finally, findings from Sturges et al. (2010) have proved the direct connection between leader member exchange and career self-management. Overall, it has been explained that LMX is influential in the worker's career path and for career success. Therefore, it will be supposed that the leader member exchange quality will positively influence the relationship between a proactive personality and the engagement in career self-management behaviors. The fifth hypothesis can be presented.

__H5:__ Leader-member exchange positively moderates the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behavior, so that as leader-member exchange quality increases the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors becomes stronger.

To conclude, the final hypothesis assumes that all the constructs presented in this chapter are associated to one another, so that proactive personality and job satisfaction are mediated by career

self-management behaviors, with the help of the leader member exchange quality that for high levels might strengthen the relationship. In the following chapters all the hypotheses will be tested and the results presented.

H6: The relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction is mediated by career self-management behaviors and this relationship can change based on different levels of leader-member exchange quality, for which higher levels of leader-member exchange quality strengthen the above relationship.

3. Method

The target of this study were participants, older than 18 years old, who have been working at least once. The sample of this study was equal to 199, recruited through snowball sampling. More than half of the participants were women (56,6%), the majority was ethnically white (87,6%) and holding a Master Degree (48,1%). The study was reviewed and approved by King's College London Research Ethics Committee (Appendix A, B). The questionnaire was implemented online through Qualtrics Online Survey Software on an anonymous and voluntary basis. The dataset has been analyzed for moderated mediation on four variables using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 (Hayes, 2013).

The present study was developed based on the literature review along with the theorized hypothesis. Proactive personality is the independent variable (Seibert et al., 1999). Cronbach's Alpha was equal to 0.839, attesting the reliability of the scale. Job satisfaction is the dependent variable (Macdonald and MacIntyre, 1997) with 0.852 of Cronbach's Alpha. Career self-management behavior is the mediator variable (Noe, 1996) and 0.874 of Cronbach Alpha. Leader-member exchange is the moderator variable (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995), with 0.843 of Cronbach's Alpha. The items were measured with a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, except for the item leader-member exchange, for which it was used a different response scale for each question (Appendix C).

4. Results

All the variables presented a high level of mean and standard deviation. The correlation analysis was performed with a Pearson correlation test. The four variables are continuous and normally distributed, presenting a bell shape in the histogram plot (Appendix D.). Correlation coefficient's (r) values show the strength of the relationship, rising from 0 to +1 and from 0 to -1 (Akoglu, 2018). If the correlation presents a value of 0, it means that there is no correlation between the variables, whereas +1 means a perfect positive correlation. According to Cohen (1988, 1992) there should be used these correlations guidelines, that delineate the effect as small, medium and high for values respectively of 0.10, 0.30 and 0.50. All correlations are significant for p-value < 0.01. The strongest correlation appears to be between job satisfaction and leader-member exchange (r = 0.697, p < 0.001), with a high effect. Whereas the lowest correlation is between proactive personality and leader-member exchange (r = 0.259, p = 0.002). In terms of the correlation between proactive personality and job satisfaction, they were found to be moderately correlated (r = 0.344, p < 0.001). Lastly, regarding the dimension career self-management behaviors it has a high effect with the other three variables. In particular, it is strongly correlated with proactive personality (r = 0.476, p < 0.001), with leader-member exchange (r = 0.562, p < 0.001) and job satisfaction (r = 0.649, p < 0.001). Overall, the correlations of this study are moderate to high correlations and are all positive.

The moderated mediation analysis was performed using SPSS PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013). The analysis was conducted with the usage of four control variables: age, gender, ethnicity and education. The intention was to examine under what circumstances proactive personality influences job satisfaction, whether it is mediated through career self-management behaviors and moderated by leader member exchange. The study is trying to determine not only whether the mediation is present, but also if the moderator is changing the strength of the relationship of the indirect effect. The foregoing assumptions will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

In the presented model there are three direct effects. The first one concerns the direct relationship between proactive personality and CSM behaviors (H1), the second one regards the relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction (H2), the third one relates to the influence of CSM behaviors on job satisfaction (H3).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the more incline someone's personality to be proactive, the higher chances he/she would engage in CSM behaviors. A hierarchical regression analysis has been performed, which proved the impact of proactive personality on CSM behaviors to be significant with a p-value < 0.001 (b = 0.8377, se = 0.2425, t = 3.4542, p = 0.0008). Additionally, the confidence interval (LLCI = 0.3571, ULCI = 1.3183) contained no zero in between, which, according to Hayes (2013), is the most appropriate methodology to confirm the significance of the coefficient. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is being supported.

The second hypothesis predicted that the more a person would commit to proactive personality, the more probabilities there would be to achieve work satisfaction. In such circumstance, the result of the regression shows that proactive personality has a significant impact on job satisfaction as it does respect the p-value < 0.05 (p = 0.0012) and the confidence interval does not present a zero in between (LLCI = 0.3873, ULCI = 1.5269). Therefore, the coefficient of 0.9571 (se = 0.2875, t = 3.3289) must be taken into consideration as it is significant. Hence, hypothesis 2 is supported.

The third and last direct effect predicted that the more employees undertake behaviors aimed at improving their career, the more satisfied they will be with their work life context. The relationship was highly significant with a coefficient of 0.7134 (se = 0.0897, t = 7.9504), a p-value of less than 0.001 and confidence intervals in line with the theorized values (LLCI = 0.5356, ULCI = 0.8912). Therefore, in this instance hypothesis 3 is supported.

The mediation effect has been studied by Baron and Kenny (1986), who have ideated a test, formed by criteria, to comprehend whether the independent variable would affect the dependent variable, through a mediating variable. The three criteria that are required to be met are: the independent

variable should vary as much as causing variations in the mediator; variations in the mediator are supposed to cause variations in the dependent variable; when paths a and b are managed, "the strongest demonstration of mediation occurring when Path c is zero", which implicitly state that there should be a significant direct path between the independent and the dependent variable. In this case, as reported in the correlation matrix in the previous chapter, the is moderately significant (0.344). However, the regression analysis performed indicates that the direct relationship between the two variables is not significant (b = -0.0033, se = 0.0983, t = -0.0335), as the p-value is equal to 0.9733, exceeding the value of 0.05, and the bootstrap confidence interval comprehends a zero (LLCI = 0.1981, ULCI = 0.1915). Therefore, according to Baron and Kenny (1986), the mediation test cannot be executed. Nevertheless, Zhao, Lynch and Chen (2010) have revised the methodology of Baron and Kenny (1986) finding out that the mediation test can still be actuated even if there is no direct effect between the variables. Hence, in this study mediation can still be researched. The next step is to verify the effect through CSM behaviors, which has been found to have a strong significance (b = 0.7134, se = 0.0897, t = 7.9504, p < 0.001, LLCI = 0.5356, ULCI = 0.8912). This means that if two people differ from one unit of proactive personality, they are expected to differ of 0.7134 of job satisfaction, due to the impact of career self-management behaviors. The overall model can explain a 45.18% variance (R2 = 0.4518, F = 15.2446) on job satisfaction, significant for a p-value < 0.001.

Finally, the indirect effect can be presented. The finding suggests that at lower levels of LMX (2.7200) the effect is 0.3001 and significant (BootLLCI = 0.0624, BootULCI = 0.4428), at average levels of LMX (3.5714) the indirect effect is significant and equal to 0.2070 (BootLLCI = 0.0603, BootULCI = 0.3543). Whereas at higher levels of LMX (4.1419) the effect (0.1445) is not significant (BootLLCI = -0.0232, BootULCI = 0.3278).

Overall, only the indirect effect is significant, so it can be stated that there is a full mediation effect (Zhao, Lynch and Chen, 2010), for which as the moderator increased the effect decreases to a point in which it is not significant. Therefore, the fourth assumption is supported.

The moderation effect occurs when the interaction between the predictor variable, in this case proactive personality, and the outcome variable, in this case CSM behaviors, varies along with the increase or decrease of another variable, which is called moderator, which in this study is leader-member exchange (Marsh et al., 2013). This was supposed by the fifth hypothesis. As a matter of fact, the study result showed a significant interaction effect among proactive personality and CSM behaviors, by LMX with $p < 0.05$ ($b = -0.1533$, $t = -2.0498$, $p = 0.0428$). Moreover, the relationship between LMX and CSM behaviors is significant, with a coefficient of 0.9571 ($se = 0.2875$, $t = 3.3289$, $p = 0.0012$). Finally. the data exhibited a 43.00% ($R2 = 0.4300$, $F = 11.8560$) variance change in the criterion variable interaction, with a p-value < 0.001.

Overall, it can be stated that the moderation effect is present in the model and consistent with the hypothesis (H5). To further analyze this process, the conditional coefficient of the focal predictor for the a path can be taken into consideration. The results show that at lower levels of LMX (2.7200) the effect is significant ($b = 0.4207$, $se = 0.0861$, $t = 4.8847$, $p < 0.001$), then for LMX equal to 3.5714 the effect is still significant ($b = 0.2901$, $se = 0.0913$, $t = 3.1768$, $p = 0.0019$), yet as LMX increases (4.1429) the effect is reduced by more than 50% and it is not significant anymore ($b = 0.2025$, $se = 0.1162$, $t = 1.7423$, $p = 0.0842$). This means that as for lower levels of LMX, it positively moderates the effect between proactive personality and CSM behaviors, yet as the construct arises there is a point in which it is not beneficial anymore. The impact of proactive personality on career self-management behaviors is much stronger at low levels of leader-member exchange.

Finally, to analyze moderated mediation the index of moderated mediation should be accounted for (Hayes, 2015). Moderation and mediation effects were both present in the examined model, therefore it is possible to analyze moderated mediation. The index of moderated mediation corresponds to "the difference of the indirect effects across levels of need for cognition" (Hayes, 2015). In the present study, the index was equal to -0.1094, yet it is not significant, as there is a zero present in the bootstrapping confidence interval (BootLLCI = -0.2249, BootULCI = 0.0848).

Moreover, hypothesis 6 supposed that for higher levels of leader-member exchange quality, the mediating impact between proactive personality and job satisfaction through career self-management would be strengthened. This may be analyzed by checking the corresponding values as the values of the moderator increase, yet as the values of LMX increase at a point the effect diminishes. Therefore, it can be stated that the sixth hypothesis (H6) is not supported, as the relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction is mediated by career self-management behavior and it is moderated by leader-member exchange, though the combined effect is not present.

5. Discussion

In the following sections the final considerations of the study will be outlined, according to the literature. This research aimed at identifying the factors that could impact on career self-management. The main research topic was whether proactive personality would positively influence career self-management, if leader-member exchange would impact that relationship and finally whether that relationship would lead to job satisfaction. The overall results of the analysis are useful to demonstrate implications for the theoretical component, as most of the hypothesis have been confirmed.

The first finding regards the existence of the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management behaviors. This association means that greater levels of proactive personality positively impact the engagement in career self-management behaviors. The literature had provided evidence that proactive personality was linked to multiple organizational factors. In particular career success appeared to have the strongest relationship (Seibert, Crant and Kraimer, 1999). In fact, personality impacts on the willingness to pursue specific career goals in order to achieve career success. Moreover, the disposition towards your own career and the proactivity to improve it are two predictors of career self-management behaviors. Therefore, this study confirmed previous theoretical findings proving the relationship between proactive personality and career self-management (Srikanth, 2012; Yu et al., 2021).

The second finding is that leader member exchange quality moderates the connection between proactive personality and career self-management. In such a way that the better quality of leader-member exchange positively influence, or makes stronger, the impact of proactive personality on career self-management. Therefore, employees that have a greater relationship with their leaders and that possess a proactive personality do more easily engage in career self-management behaviors than employees that do not possess a strong proactive personality or have a bad relationship with their leader. Previous studies looked at the effects of leader member exchange, analyzing the fact that different quality of leader member exchange result into different behaviors of the workers (Breland et al., 2007). Moreover, other findings suggested that leader-member exchange would positively influence career success (Erdogan et al., 2004). Finally the study confirmed that the favorable impact of proactive personality on career self-management would have been enhanced by high quality leader-member exchange.

An additional contribution of this study regarded job satisfaction. Firstly it confirmed the relationship between career self-management and job satisfaction. Jung and Takeuchi (2018) had already verified this association, confirming that the individual is the main contributor to the success of their own career path and job satisfaction was linked to the achievement of career goals (Adekola, 2011). Secondly, it proven the positive relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction, as predicted by the literature. In fact, it was studied that proactive personality positively influence feelings of job satisfaction, as personal characteristics tend to make workers more engaged and intended to strive to achieve greeter results and career goals (Li et al., 2010; Franek and Vecera, 2008; Li et al., 2010; Ng et al., 2005; Li et al, 2017).

The final assumption was the connection between the four construct presented. Thereby, hypothesis six presumed that the relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction would have been mediated by career self-management behaviors and that greater degrees of leader-member exchange quality would positively impact the previous relationship. Yet, the hypothesis was not supported by

the data gathered, even if it would have been key to the enrichment of the literature. In the following paragraphs the main limitations and final conclusions will be outlined.

The limitations of this study can be highlighted in this paragraph. First of all, the sample of this study was equal to 199 respondents, yet not all of them completed all the survey. The sample was too small to generalize the findings to the whole population and some responses were missing. Additionally, the responses were collected through snowball sampling, which enabled to reach a greater number of people, yet it may encounter the problem of under sampling some ethnicities. For instance, in this case 87,6% of the population was ethnically white, which resulted in a disproportion of the overall population. Finally, the questionnaire was self reported, which may encounter the issue of honesty of the respondent.

To conclude, the present research aimed at understanding better the concept of career self-management. In particular, the specific research topic was whether proactive personality and leader-member exchange would impact career self-management in such a way that it would leader to job satisfaction. The results of the analysis presented interesting findings as proactive personality and leader-member exchange were positively connected to career self-management. Moreover, it was found that career self-management behaviors would foster job satisfaction. Though, there was no support for the connection of all the constructs. Therefore, it has been suggested how to implement another research based on the present model, but with some improvements. Finally, this study contributed to the present literature confirming some of the influences already studied and creating a new influential model to be better developed in the future.