

Employability and Career Success Across the Life-Span

*Age as moderator in the Relationship Between Self- Versus Supervisor
Ratings of Employability and Career Success*

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Introduction



- Employability (or career potential) is seen as a prerequisite for career success (cf. Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006).
- Far-reaching changes in the workforce (ageing and dejuvenization) that necessitate further empirical research on ageing and careers.
- Career management only possible given a thorough understanding of what constitutes one's employability.

Aims of the Study

- Firstly, to test the operationalization of employability, and to investigate whether the factor structure for self-reported versus supervisor-rated employability is similar across two age groups of workers ('youngsters' versus 'over-forties').
- Secondly, we examine the predictive validity of employability in the light of objective career success, using two sources of raters (employees and their immediate supervisors).

Aims of the Study



- Thirdly, this study aims to examine whether age of the employee moderates the relationship between self- and supervisor ratings of employability, on the one hand, and objective career success, on the other.

Employability



- “The continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competences” (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006).

Career Success

- “The accumulated interaction between a variety of individual, organizational and societal norms, behaviors, and work practices” (Boudreau, Boswell, & Judge, 2001), and refers to real or objective, and perceived or subjective accomplishments of individuals in their work lives.”

Multi-Rater or Multi-Source Ratings



- For example, from supervisors, peers, subordinates, and customers, instead of relying on appraisals from a single source.
- The rationale behind this is that different evaluation perspectives offer unique and valuable information, and thus incremental validity to the assessment of individual performance.

Hypotheses



- We expect an equivalent factor structure of the employability construct among the rater groups (employees and supervisors), and we advocate the comparability of the different rater group scores. Moreover, in line with previous research, we expect a similar factor structure across different age groups of workers (Hypothesis 1).

Hypotheses



- Employability is positively associated with career success (Hypothesis 2 for self-rated, and Hypothesis 3 for supervisor-rated employability).

Hypotheses



- Age moderates the relationship between supervisor ratings of employability and objective career success. More specifically, we expect a stronger relationship between supervisor-rated employability and career success of the youngsters versus the over-forties (Hypothesis 4).

Hypotheses



- Age moderates the relationship between self-rated employability and objective career success. More specifically, we expect a stronger relationship between self-rated employability and career success of the over-forties versus the youngsters (Hypothesis 5).

Explanations for the Moderating Effect of Age

- Negative stereotypical beliefs about older workers (Boerlijst, Van der Heijden, & Van Assen, 1993; Offerman & Gowing, 1990).
- Increased P-E fit for older workers (Watkins & Subich, 1995; Wright & Hamilton, 1978).

Methodology

- N = 303 pairs of employees and supervisors working at a large Dutch company producing building materials (response rate was 91.8%).
- 83.5% male and 16.5% female employees.
- Mean age employees 41 years ($sd = 9.15$).
- Mean organizational tenure employees 10.74 ($sd = 9.61$).

Methodology



- 95.0% male and 5% female supervisors.
- Mean age supervisors 43 years (*sd* = 7.96).

Measures



Employability: (1) occupational expertise (15 items); (2) anticipation and optimization (8 items); (3) personal flexibility (8 items); (4) corporate sense (7 items); (5) balance (9 items).

Measures



Objective Career Success (Gattiker & Larwood, 1986) (three single items): (1) organization-specific objective hierarchical success; (2) overall objective hierarchical success; (3) current gross income.

Psychometric Qualities



- All employability measures demonstrated good internal consistencies, for both groups of raters.
- The correlations between the supervisor-rated employability dimensions are high, while these are somewhat lower for the self-ratings.

Correlations

- The agreement between self- and supervisor ratings for the same employability dimension ranges from .22 to .37.
- Moreover, all supervisor ratings of employability appear to be unrelated to objective career success outcomes, which might indeed indicate that possible moderators, like age, are involved.

Correlations

- However, regarding the self-reported ratings of employability, six out of the fifteen possible correlations with the three objective career success outcomes are significant but rather weak, which again points to the influence of possible moderators.

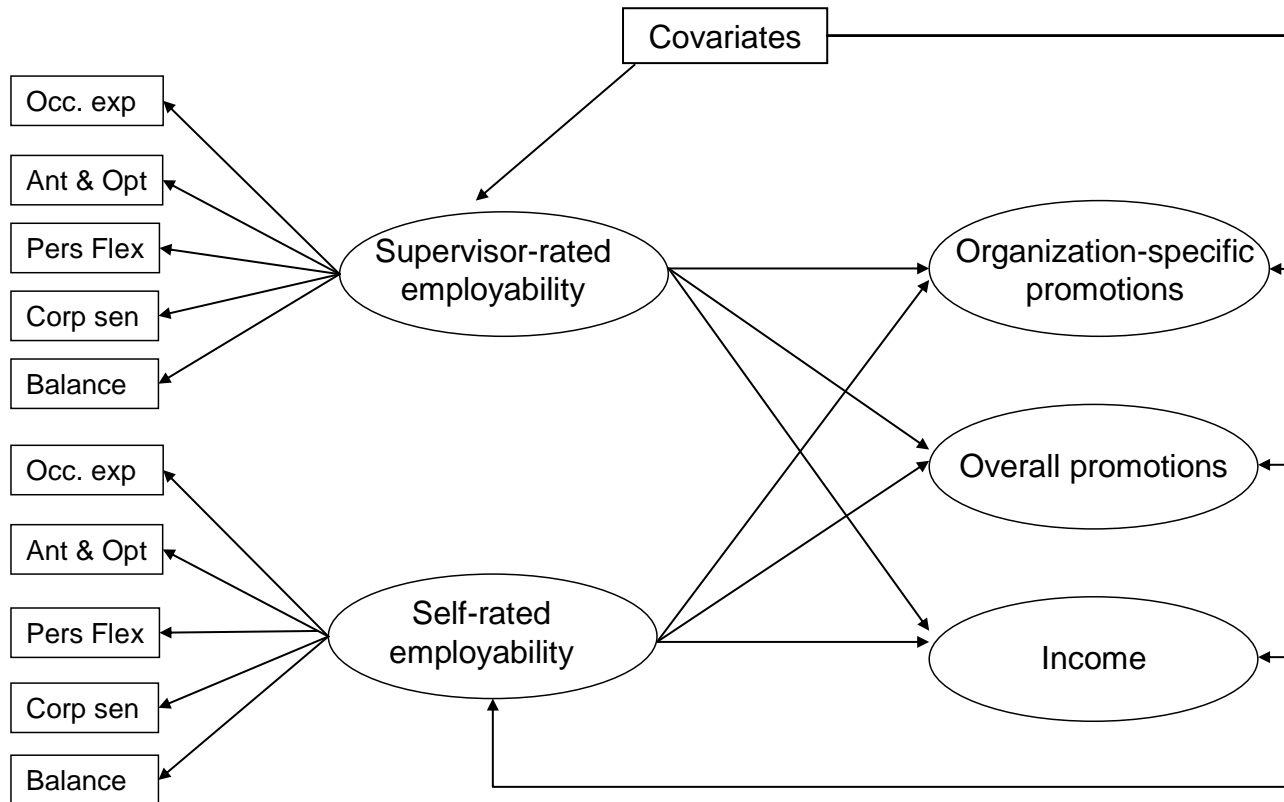
Results Multi-Group CFA



- Hypothesis 1 is confirmed: The factor structure is indeed equivalent for both age groups.

SEM Model

Figure 1: A Career Success Enhancing Employability Model Moderated by Age



Results SEM Analyses

- Self-reported employability was positively related to overall promotions. This provides partial support for Hypothesis 2.
- Supervisor-rated employability was significantly, but negative, related to overall promotions. This implies that Hypothesis 3 is to be rejected.

The Relationship between Employability and Objective Career Success

- It might be that an ‘instrumental style of leadership’ plays an important role (Boerlijst, Van der Heijden, & Van Assen, 1993).
- In case of high employee career potential, the supervisor restrains the employee from moving to another job or to another field.

Results Multi-Group SEM for the Younger Employees



- Self-reported employability was significantly and positively related to both overall promotions and current gross income.
- The supervisor ratings were positively related to current gross income.

Results Multi-Group SEM for the Older Employees



- Self-reported employability was positively related to overall promotions, while supervisor ratings were negatively related to overall promotions.
- All other structural relationships appeared to be non-significant.

Conclusions Multi-Group SEM

- Hypothesis 4 (relatively stronger positive relationships between supervisor-rated employability and career success for the youngsters versus the over-forties) is partly supported.
- Hypothesis 5 (relatively stronger relationships between self-rated employability and career success for the over-forties, compared to their younger counterparts) is to be rejected.

Outcomes and Implications of the Test of the Career Success Enhancing Employability Model Moderated by Age

- Highly different results have been found for the over-forties compared to the youngsters.
- Possibly, our results reconfirm our ideas regarding the prevalence of age-related differences in supervisory attitudes towards their employees (see Van der Heijden, 1998).

Outcomes and Implications of the Test of the Career Success Enhancing Employability Model Moderated by Age

- It is conceivable that for the over-forties in particular, the instrumental style of leadership' plays an important role (Boerlijst, Van der Heijden, & Van Assen, 1993).

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research



- Possibility of response set consistencies as all data have been collected using questionnaires.
- Cross-sectional approach implies need for further research to address the issue of causality.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research



- Generalizability to other occupational settings and/or other countries has to be investigated.
- Age dissimilarity research.

Practical Implications

- Human Resource policies should be rooted into a so-called ‘conservation’ model instead of the long-adhered ‘depreciation’ model (Yeats, Folts, & Knapp, 2000).
- Especially, the employee’s immediate supervisor should bear responsibility to enhance life-long learning.

Practical Implications

- With an age-conscious HRM policy, that is aimed to guide the amount of employability, ageing does not need to pose a threat.
- The employability instrument (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006) has high practical value in the light of enhancing life-long career success.