**How does Perceived Discrimination Affect Latinas' Subjective Career Success?
The Mediating Roles of Increased Work-Family Conflict and
Decreased Organizational Commitment**

Presented at the Academy of Management
Showcase Symposium Session #1721 (GDO, CMS, OB)
Diversifying Leadership: Perspectives from Women of Color in the US, India, and South Africa
8/11/2015, 9:45 to 11:15 at Pinnacle Vancouver Harbourfront Hotel in the Tuscany Room

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1

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationships between perceived discrimination, work-to-family conflict, organizational commitment, and subjective career success of 518 Latina business professionals. Specifically, the current study tested and found support for a serial mediation model whereby perceived discrimination increased work-to-family conflict which then decreased organizational commitment; ultimately having the effect of decreasing subjective career success. The two mediators explained 79% of the relationship between perceived discrimination and subjective career success. Additionally, the overall model explained 10% of the variance in subjective career success. These findings help to identify mechanisms that undermine Latina Professionals' perceptions of career success as a result of perceived discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

Hispanics are currently the largest and also one of the fastest-growing ethnic or racial minority groups in the nation. At nearly 52 million people, this key demographic constitutes approximately 17.1% of the United States population (U.S. DOL, 2015) and 16% of this country's workforce (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013), with a purchasing power of $1.5 trillion (Nielson, 2014). Unfortunately, there has not been a corresponding increase in the proportion of Latinos within professional or leadership roles. For example, Latinos make up just 8.4% of those working in management and professional occupations, and less than 5% of all chief executives (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013.

Hispanics' sizable and growing presence in this country is undeniable; however, some indicators suggest that Hispanics have lower levels of objective career success relative to other major racial and ethnic groups. For example, recent data show that Hispanics have the lowest average weekly earnings (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015) and are disproportionately underrepresented amongst the top professional and leadership ranks across Corporate America (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015, HACR, 2013). This underrepresentation of Hispanic business professionals and leaders in organizations across the United States is problematic and calls for a closer examination of factors-especially those influenced by their experiences with discrimination - that may inhibit or facilitate Latina Professionals and their subsequent opportunities and career development.

Interesting enough, while Latinas (women) only comprise 42% of the overall Hispanic workforce, 26% of them are working in management, professional and related occupations, while Latino men are at 17% (US DOL, 2014). While Latinas are still below 50% of the overall

Hispanic workforce, the fact that they are more highly represented in these positions makes for an important group to study.

Therefore, our study examines the career experiences and perceptions of Latina Business Professionals to identify mechanisms that undermine their perceptions of career success. The purpose of our study is to better understand how aspects of Latinas' perceptions of discrimination influence work-family conflict, organizational commitment, and ultimately adversely affect subjective career success.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Hispanic Career Success

Traditional career success has been defined as the "positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievements one has accumulated as a result of one's work experience" (Judge, et al., 1995: 486). Given that career success is a socially constructed reality, we recognize the distinctive role that cultural values play in Hispanics' career-related values and perceptions and may serve as a frame of reference for how career success is defined (DelCampo, Rogers, & Hinrichs, 2010; Judge, Cable, Boudreau & Bretz, 1995). Additionally, males and females may have markedly different perspectives on what constitutes the subjective components of career success. Thus, we posit that Latinas' perceptions of their own career success may in fact be different than Latinos. As such, we consider different conceptualizations of subjective career success for Hispanic female professionals in the United States.

Subjective Career Success

The construct of career success is viewed as having elements of both objective and subjective dimensions (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Heslin, 2005; Judge et al., 1995; Poole & Langan-Fox, 1993). Objective career success consists of concrete, specific, measurable and easily

observable career accomplishments attained during the course of one's career (Ballout, 2007; Heslin, 2005; Poole & Langan-Fox, 1993). Conversely, subjective career success consists of affective aspirations involving an individual's sense of pride and satisfaction with one's career (Hall, 1976; Heslin, 2005; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). It is most often associated with one's own perception of career success, organizational commitment, as well as job or career satisfaction (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Hall, 1976; Heslin, 2005; Judge et al., 1995; Martins, Eddleston, & Veiga, 2002; Ng et al., 2005). Due to the conceptual/empirical distinctiveness between objective and subjective career success, not to mention the demonstrated differences in predictors and gender differences in subjective career success (whereby organizational investment in human capital and organizational support influence women's subjective career success more than men) (Ng et al., 2005), the current study aims to simplify an incredibly complex perceptual construct by focusing solely on the subjective career success perceptions of Latinas.

Previous research on predictors of career success has considered minority status (Judge et al., 1995) and even race (Ng et al., 2005) as socio-demographic moderators. However variables related to one's perceptions, specifically those focused on perceived discrimination, have been largely overlooked in the vocational literature. Additionally, there have been no studies that examine Latina (or Latino) career success. As mentioned previously, subjective career success involves perceptions, thus, our investigation highlights the roles of perceived discrimination, organizational commitment, and work-family conflict on subjective career success.

Perceived Discrimination

Discrimination and prejudice on the basis of racioethnicity against Hispanic employees in the United States is well documented and continues to exist (Markert, 2010; Negi, 2012). One

factor in the discrimination of ethnic minorities is visible or highly identifiable racial or phenotypical differences (Phinney, 2003). However, while some members of an ethnic group, especially Hispanics, may not carry the stereotypical physical characteristics of their ethnic group, they may still experience negative treatment and prejudice based on their accents, languages, names, among other ethnic markers (Bergman, Watrous-Rodriguez, & Chalkley, 2008; Mundra et al., 2003).

Minority employees who have perceived race discrimination or harassment in the workplace experience a host of negative outcomes including generalized job stress, supervisor and coworker dissatisfaction, and increased perceived organizational tolerance of harassment (Buchanan & Fitzgerald, 2007; Mays, Coleman, & Jackson, 1996), to name a few. Those who perceive that they are being discriminated against might be more likely to also associate this act as a lack of support at the organizational level. Since perceived organizational support has been demonstrated to influence women's subjective career success (Ng et al., 2005), we predict that subjective career success decreases for Latina professionals who perceive discrimination at work. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1. Latina Professionals' perceived discrimination is negatively related to their subjective career success.

In addition to this direct hypothesis, we were also interested in the underlying processes that occur for Latinas. Therefore, we chose to include two further variables, work-to-family conflict and organizational commitment. We know that work-to-family conflict is negatively related to perceived job satisfaction (Noor, 2004) and career satisfaction (Martins, Eddleston, & Veiga, 2002) and, particularly for Latinas, is important to consider. Previous studies have also

suggested that organizational commitment is related both to perceived discrimination and career success (Ensher, Grant-Vallone, & Donaldson, 2001).

Work-family Conflict

Work–family conflict is "a form of interrole conflict in which the general demands of, time devoted to, and strain created by the job interfere with performing family-related responsibilities" (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996: 401). When employees are discriminated against, there is an underlying strain put upon these employees. Minnotte (2012) found, in a national sample of 2,335 working adults, that perceived discrimination was associated with higher levels of work-to-life conflict regardless of discrimination type (age, race, sex) and even when controlling for workplace social support. Additionally, scholars suggest that race and gender increases the potential for experiencing stressors for women of color (see Buchanan & Fitzgerald, 2007 for a review) ultimately placing them at a "double jeopardy" for discrimination and job-related stress (Mays, Coleman, & Jackson, 1996). Some have suggested that women's career aspirations are influenced (both positively and/or negatively) by their perceptions and expectations for career opportunities (Evans & Heir, 1991; Mays et al., 1996; Turner & Turner, 1975). When work-to-family conflict arises via perceived discrimination, Latina women could potentially view this as harmful to their subjective career success. We therefore predict the following two relationships in relation to work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 2a. Latina Professionals' perceived discrimination is positively related to their work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 2b. Work-family conflict mediates the relationship between perceived discrimination and subjective career success.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is one of the most widely studied attitudes in organizational behavior research. Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) defined organizational commitment as the behavior that connects employees to the organization. Additionally, Meyer and Herscovitch (2001: 301) argued that, regardless of the target, general commitment could be defined as "a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets."

There is a widely established negative relationship between perceived discrimination and organizational commitment (c.f., Ensher, Grant-Vallone, Donaldson, 2001; Orpen, 1995; Rabl & Triana, 2013; Triana, García & Colella, 2010). For Hispanic employees, discrimination in the workplace has been shown to adversely contribute to employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and work stress above and beyond other work stressors such as role conflict and ambiguity (Sanchez & Brock, 1996). Therefore, we seek to confirm these results with the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 3a. Latina Professionals' perceived discrimination is negatively related to their organizational commitment.*

Moreover, Vandenberg and Lance (1992) found that employees who felt high levels of organizational commitment also experienced greater job satisfaction. Additionally, highly committed workers are motivated to work hard in part because they tend to feel more upbeat about their overall job situations (Thoresen et al., 2003). Perceptually, those workers adversely affected by perceived discrimination (and subsequently lowered levels of organizational commitment) might view their subjective career success to be at risk thereby mediating the relationship.

> *Hypothesis 3b. Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between perceived discrimination and subjective career success.*

8

Finally, we expect the relationships described in the preceding hypotheses to follow a pattern of serial mediation (See Hayes, 2013, model 6), whereby perceived discrimination increases work-to-family conflict which then decreases organizational commitment - ultimately having the effect of decreasing subjective career success.

> *Hypothesis 4. The hypothesized effect of perceived discrimination on subjective career success for Latina Professionals will be mediated by work-family conflict and organizational commitment. Work-family conflict and organizational commitment will follow a serial mediation.*

METHOD

Sample

Our sample consisted of 518 Latina professionals, drawn from a survey of members of a national Latino organization. The vast majority (94.2%) of respondents were currently employed in a variety of industries and organizational roles at the time of survey completion. Organization sizes for respondents varied considerably, ranging from self-employed to over 50,000 employees. The median category chosen for organization size corresponded to an organization of between 1001 to 5000 total employees. In terms of position level in the organization, 8.7% are hourly/non-exempt, 9.8% are entry level, 53.5% are entry level, 18.7% are senior level, 3.1% are executive/chief officer level, and 3.7% are owner/self-employed—with the remaining position levels undisclosed. Respondents ranged in age from between 22 to 67 years (Median = 37 years)—with the majority classified as Generation Xers (58.5%)—and reported a mean of 12.5 years of professional experience.

First generation immigrants (36.9%) or children of immigrants (36.0%) represent the majority of the sample. Region/country of family origin consisted of 6.4% Central American

category, 4.2% Dominican, 32.8% Mexican, 21.2% Puerto Rican, 19.1% South American, and 5.6% Spaniard—with the remaining respondents choosing the category "other". More than half are bilingual (53.3%), while 32.8% reported being English dominant and 12.5% reported being Spanish dominant. In terms of highest level of education obtained, 64.3% reported earning an MBA or Master's degree, 1.2% a law degree, 1.4% a Ph.D or M.D, 28.6% a Bachelor's degree, and 3.3% reported having completed "some college" or an Associate's degree.

Measures

All measures except number of promotions and compensation utilized a five point Likert scale (1= Strongly disagree; 5= Strongly agree).

Subjective career success. Subjective career success is often measured by assessing one's career satisfaction. As such, we used a five item measure (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Wolff & Moser, 2009) that consisted of items such as "*I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals.*" Participants indicated their agreement on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The reliability of this scale was .86.

Perceived discrimination. We used a ten item scale measuring perceived discrimination (Sanchez & Brock, 1996). This scale includes items such as "*At work, many people have stereotypes about my culture or ethnic group and treat me as if they were true.*" Once again, participants used a 5 point Likert scale to indicate their agree, with 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree. This scale has a reliability of .87.

Work-family conflict. Following previous research, we utilized a four item measure (Grzywacz & Bass, 2003; Hill, 2005), this was assessed using a 5 point Likert scale where 1=Strongly disagree and 5=Strongly agree. Individual items included "*Your job reduces the effort you can*

give to activities at home" and "*Your job makes you feel too tired to do the things that need attention at home*." The reliability of this scale was .87.

Organizational commitment. Commitment to the organization was measured using a four item scale from the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979) as used in Schaubroeck, May & Brown (1994). Items included questions such as "*I really care about the fate of this organization*" and "*For me, this is the best of all possible organizations to work for.*" The scale reliability was .90.

Control variables

We used the number of promotions and compensation levels as control variables, both indicators of objective career success. Our control variables represent variables that are commonly used in career outcome research (Ballout, 2007; Blancero & Cruz, 2014; Judge, Higgins, Thoresen & Barrick, 1999)

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities are present in Table 1. We tested hypotheses by conducting a serial mediation analysis in which both of the proposed mediators were tested simultaneously. We used Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro for SPSS with 5000 bias corrected bootstrapped samples to examine the relationships depicted in Figure 1 (see Hayes, 2013, Model 6). Number of promotions and annual compensation were included as control variables in the analysis.[1]

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Together, the overall model explained 10% of the variance in subjective career success. Supporting H1, results indicated (see Table 2) that the overall effect of perceived discrimination on subjective career success (*c*) was significant, $b = -.14$, p = .005. Supporting H2a, the path from perceived discrimination to work-family conflict (*a1*) was significant, $b = .33, p < .001$, and supporting H3a, the path from perceived discrimination to organizational commitment (*a2*) was significant, $b = -.16, p = .003$. The path from work-family conflict to organizational commitment (*d21*) was also significant, $b = -.15, p < .001$.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

As predicted, there was evidence for significant mediation overall, estimate = -.11, *SE* = .02, 95% CI [-.16, -.07], with our mediators explaining 79% of the relationship between perceived discrimination and subjective career success. With the mediators controlled, the direct relationship between perceived discrimination and subjective career success (*c'*) was no longer significant, estimate = -.03, *SE* = .05, 95% CI [-.12, .06].

Next, we decomposed the mediated effect into components. Supporting H2b, the specific indirect effect through work-family conflict (M1) was significant, estimate = -.04, *SE* = .01, 95% CI [-.07, -.01]. Supporting H3b, the specific indirect effect through organizational commitment (M2) was also significant, estimate = -.02, *SE* = .02, 95% CI [-.04, -.01]. Finally, supporting H4, the specific indirect effect for the serial mediation path (M1 and M2) was also significant, estimate = -.06, *SE* = .02, 95% CI [-.10, -.01]. As predicted, perceived discrimination predicted work-family conflict, $b = .33, p < .001$, which predicted organizational commitment, $b = -.15, p < .001$, which predicted subjective career success, $b = .36, p < .001$ (see Figure 2).

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

DISCUSSION

The goal of our study was to examine the career experiences and perceptions of Latina Business Professionals to identify mechanisms that undermine their perceptions of career success. We wanted to have a better understanding of how aspects of Latinas' perceptions of discrimination influenced work-family conflict, organizational commitment, and, eventually, subjective career success.

Our data suggest that Latinas who perceive they are being discriminated against in the workplace will have lower perceptions of career success. Latinas often perceive discrimination in the workplace and, for Latinas with family responsibilities, the salience of their culturally prescribed role as family caregivers may contribute to increased work-family conflict (Blancero & Cruz, 2014). There is some evidence of a disparate impact of work-family conflict by gender such that Hispanic women experience significantly more work-family conflict than Hispanic men (Rodriguez, 2009; Roehling, Jarvis, & Swope, 2005). Our data suggest that this conflict may stem from perceived discrimination and this perceived discrimination also leads to lower organizational commitment.

Our research confirms that the path leading from perceived discrimination by Latinas to their perceptions of career success is mediated by both work-family conflict and organizational commitment. This contributes to the literature by providing insight into how perceived discrimination can influence career success. First, we believe our contribution is to the growing and important field of Latinos in the workplace. This is the first study that empirically examines Latina career success. Examining discrimination, work-family conflict and organizational commitment have provided insight into what makes Latinas perceive that they are satisfied with

their careers. Given the large and growing population of Latinas, this also has practical contributions.

Second, our research contributes to the careers literature by studying these variables and uncovering the mediational properties of work-family conflict and organizational commitment. Organizations should employ work-family balance options for all their employees, knowing how this impacts their overall lives. If organizations are interested in promoting and supporting Latina executives in leadership, they need to better understand how these leaders think about career success.

Limitations

For this paper, we looked at Latinas only, and for a more robust discussion of Latina career success, it will be useful to look at both men and women. While our interest was in Latinas, we purport that cultural values, gender, and discrimination are factors in subjective career success, thus it would have been more comprehensive to examine Latinas along with Latinos and examine the differences. Additionally, our dataset included all women who self-identified as Latina. Due to the scarcity of research on Latinos in general and Latinas in particular, we feel we make a contribution to the career literature, however grouping all Latinas together suggests that they are always similar, and this is not true. Latinas are born inside and outside of the United States. If born outside of the United States, they come from a broad variety of countries including, Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Panama, Argentina, Colombia, Chile and many others. While there are shared values and language, there are also differences.

Because our data are collected from individuals, we have the possibility of common method bias. As well, data are cross sectional. Examining data from a longitudinal data set would make our results more robust.

Future Research

As always, conducting research asks more questions than it answers. Future research needs to be done that looks at both objective and subjective career success for Latinos. Additionally, other variables can be studied, such as level of bicultural identity and country of origin. Examining specific industries or regions within the United States may also provide additional insight into different cultures. For example, are their differences in career success perceptions when one is the 'only' Latina/o in the organization vs. one of a few or one of many? Similarly, the region where the organization is located can be examined for demographic concentrations. Another fruitful stream of research can examine these constructs by generations. Do Millennials perceive career success differently than Generation Xers or Baby Boomers?

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Footnote

[1]A model omitting these control variables yielded similar results and led to identical statistical

conclusions.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Subjective Career Success	3.35	0.86	(.86)					
2. Perceived Discrimination	2.08	0.73	-.13**	(.87)				
3. Work-Family Conflict	3.10	0.99	-.18**	.25**	(.87)			
4. Organizational Commitment	3.73	0.89	.43**	-.17**	-.20**	(.90)		
5. Promotions	2.80	1.77	.22**	-.02	-.04	.15**	(na)	
6. Compensation	6.24	4.65	.25**	-.04	.10*	.07	.35**	(na)

Note. $N = 518$. Reliabilities are presented on the diagonal of the correlation matrix. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 2. Path Coefficients and Confidence Intervals from the Serial Multiple Mediation Model Estimated Using PROCESS.

Path Estimates	Coefficient (*SE*)	LLCI	ULCI
a1	0.33 (.06)***	0.22	0.44
a2	-0.16 (.05)**	-0.26	-0.05
d21	-0.15 (.04)***	-0.23	-0.07
b1	-0.11 (.04)**	-0.18	-0.04
b2	0.36 (.04)***	0.29	0.44
c	-0.14 (.05)**	-0.24	-0.04
c′	-0.03 (.05)	-0.12	0.06
Indirect effects	Effect (*SE*)	LLCI	ULCI
Total	-0.11 (.02)	-0.16	-0.07
M1	-0.04 (.01)	-0.07	-0.01
M2	-0.02 (.01)	-0.04	-0.01
M1 and M2	-0.06 (.02)	-0.10	-0.01

Note. LLCI = 95% lower-limit confidence interval; ULCI = 95% upper-limit confidence interval. All effects controlling for number of promotions and compensation. a1 = path from perceived discrimination to work-family conflict; a2 = path from perceived discrimination to organizational commitment; d21 = path from work-family conflict to organizational commitment; b1 = path from work-family conflict to subjective career success; b2 = path from organizational commitment to subjective career success; c = path from perceived discrimination to subjective career success without mediators; c′ = path from perceived discrimination to subjective career success with mediators included; M1 = work-family conflict; M2 = organizational commitment. †significant indirect effect. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Figure Captions

Figure 1. Theoretical model depicting proposed meditational relationships.

Figure 2. Mediational analysis of the effect of perceived discrimination on Latinas' subjective
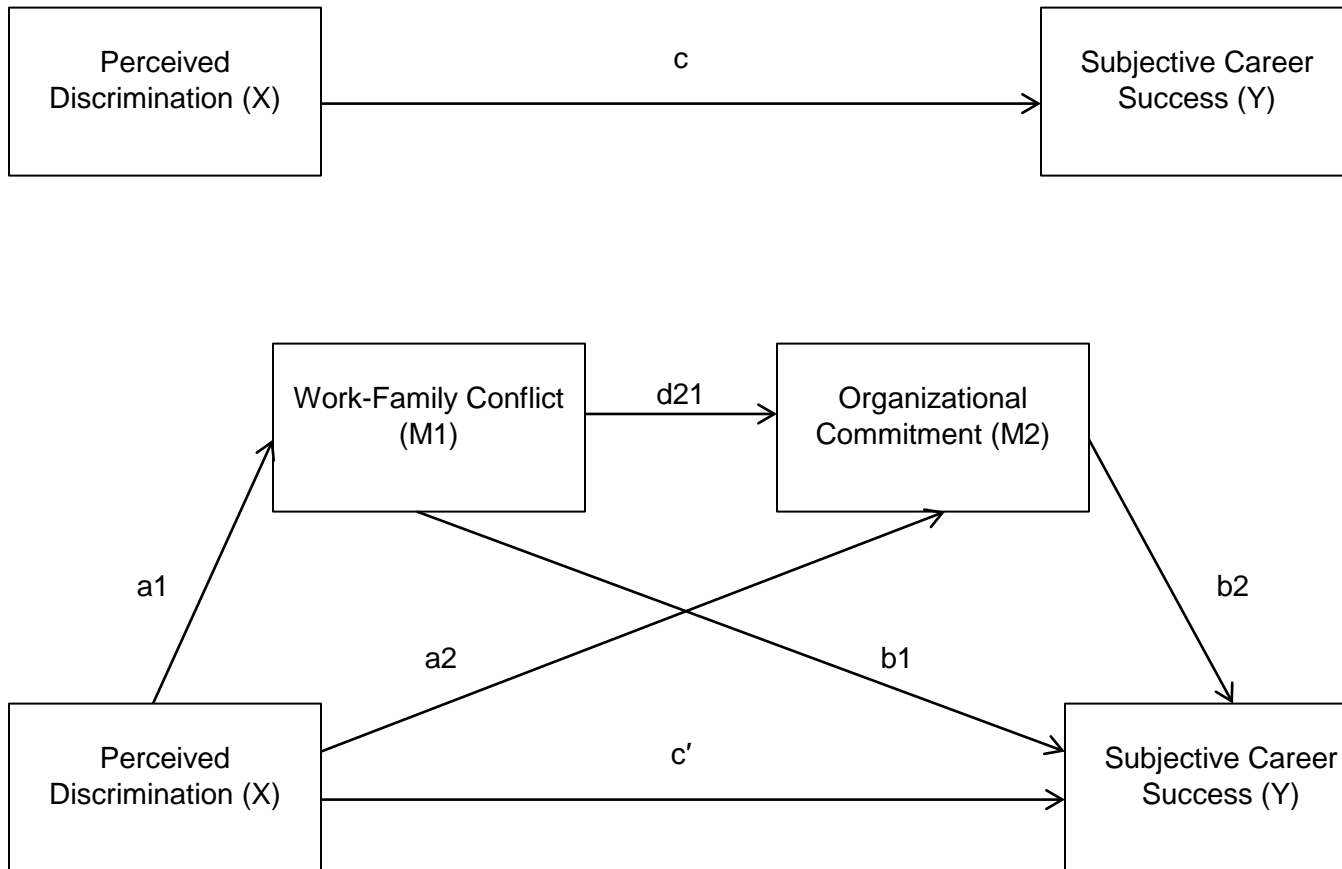
career success.

Figure 1.

Figure 2.