

Balancing Career and Academic Pursuits of Young Professionals for Sustainable Career and Education Development

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Keywords: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis, Career-Academic Balance, Sustainable Development Goals, Young Professionals.

Abstract: Young professionals aged 24 to 29 often struggle to juggle the different needs of their career and academic pursuits. This dual responsibility builds overlapping pressures that can affect their personal well-being, their academic achievement, and professional development. In this research, the authors utilized the SEM analysis to investigate the major drivers that affect this balance. An online survey questionnaire was employed to collect data among fifty participants on indicators such as balanced engagement, academic performance, career achievement, and psychological and emotional stressors. The result of the study emphasizes the importance of academic performance, professional advancement, and job contentment; moreover too, having structured routines, a good support system, well-being, and stress resilience are all very important. The findings of this study gave valuable insights to young professionals, employers, and educational institutions in creating an enabling environment for career growth and lifelong learning. The SEM findings further provide a basis for future studies aimed at enhancing support mechanisms for sustainable academic and professional growth that are aligned with broader global sustainability efforts.

1 INTRODUCTION

Young professionals within the ages of 24 - 29 are characterized by a challenging phase of their lives, which primarily consists of deciding between the continuation of education, learning new skills, or fully devoting their time to career establishment. The turning point of a person's life during the workforce transition, from a student role to an earning role, creates overlapping duties and responsibilities. The extent to which these different role conflicts, or blended, overlapping duties, and responsibilities involve the different components of a person's life clearly shows their overall well-being, functioning, and life satisfaction. The stress of being in different competing roles is well documented, as is the resultant academic and occupational strife [1] - [3].

There is a growing global demand for postgraduate education and continued professional development. Advanced education is considered an essential part of resource development, providing the knowledge, skills, and innovation required in a

competitive environment. [4]. Although higher education broadens knowledge and creates new work opportunities, it may also disrupt a person's everyday activities. For young professionals, the problem of juggling education and job responsibilities is a significant cause of stress, frequently resulting in poor performance in both areas [1], [5].

Moreover, the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have identified education as one of the foundational elements of a sustainable society [6]. Obtaining more education is related to achieving SDG 4 (Quality Education), and securing decent work is also related to achieving this. Having the mental strength to handle stress and maintain well-being is also represented by SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being [5], [7]. These emphasize that the imbalance between education and work is more than a personal problem; it is relevant to the capability of the workforce and the development of society.

Unfortunately, social comparison, fear of failure, and performance expectations are among the other typical stressors, in addition to health and

interpersonal issues [2], [3], [5]. However, being optimistic, resilient, and having good time management may benefit the young professionals who strive to balance work and their academic endeavors [7], [8]. Hence, the identification of factors that foster sustained professional and educational development is critical, not only for individual completion and inclusion but also for the overall well-being of the workforce.

2 STUDY FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

This study aims to determine the factors that influence the way young professionals, aged 24 to 29, balance their work and further education. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), it examines the key elements that affect this balance and their effects on both professional and personal development. The study highlights the challenges faced by young professionals in balancing competing responsibilities

while also identifying the elements that support long-term career and educational development.

2.1 Conceptual Model

The framework of this study is shown in Figure 1. According to Figure 1, the study's goal is to investigate the intricate connection between young professionals' academic and professional performance between the ages of 24 and 29. Furthermore, it aims to understand how their combined success indicators, encompassing career achievements and academic accomplishments, are influenced by a range of cognitive and non-cognitive stressors. This study's main goal is to investigate the fundamental elements that allow young professionals to successfully manage their academic and professional goals in the face of a variety of cognitive and non-cognitive pressures. Thus, the study focuses on examining the direct relationships between career success, academic success, emotional factors, and psychological stress in influencing balanced career and academic performance.

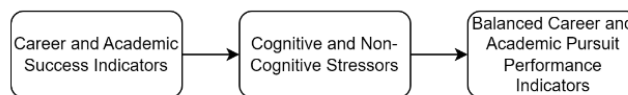


Figure 1: Conceptual model.

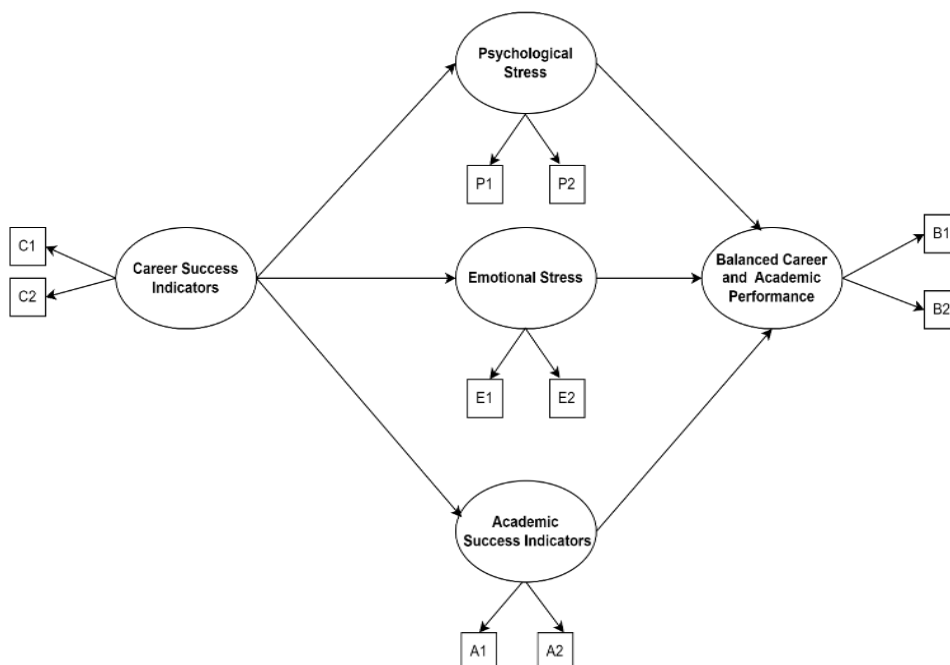


Figure 2: Initial SEM model.

Figure 2 presents the initial SEM model of the study, which is integral in assessing the factors influencing the balance between career and academic pursuits among young professionals aged 24-29, forming the core of this study’s conceptual framework.

2.2 Participants

Respondents were initially chosen from the age group of 24 to 29, a demographic segment known for simultaneously balancing their work and educational responsibilities. The research collected responses from a total of 50 individuals to address the study's objectives. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is typically applied to large sample sizes, with 50 participants often considered the minimum acceptable number [9].

Table 1 contains the demographics of tolerable survey respondents.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents.

Attributes	Category	N=50	Percentage
Gender Classification	Man	24	48%
	Woman	26	52%
Age	24	8	16%
	25	7	14%
	26	11	22%
	27	8	16%
	28	8	16%
	29	8	16%

2.3 Questionnaire

An online survey questionnaire was conducted based on the framework of the study to determine the factors causing impact on young professionals between the ages of 24 and 29 in striking a balance between their academic and professional endeavors (see Appendix A). The instrument was divided into two sections. The first section obtained the demographic information, including gender classification, age, undergraduate degree program, and current graduate program enrollment. The second section measured the latent constructs incorporated in the Structural Equation Model (SEM). A 5-point rating scale was utilized to rate each topic, allowing respondents to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with each assertion.

2.4 SEM Analysis

The SEM analysis, illustrated in Figure 1, was carried out using SmartPLS to validate the hypotheses of the study. There are five variables in the model. The list of factors taken into consideration is shown in Table 1, and the matching latent variables are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Latent variables.

Relationship	P Values	Decision
A -> B	0.001	Statistically Significant
C -> A	0.004	Statistically Significant
C -> E	0.005	Statistically Significant
E -> B	0.001	Statistically Significant
P -> B	0.049	Statistically Significant

Note: Significance Level *p<0.05

3 RESULTS

3.1 Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Composite Reliability (CR) and outer loadings were used to evaluate each construct's reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to evaluate convergent validity. The Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method was used to conduct Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to evaluate the scale's overall validity and reliability. The AVE values validated convergent validity, while the CR and outer loading values reported reliability.

The initial SEM results are presented in Table 3 along with the values for each indicator. The outer loading values of these indicators were used to evaluate their reliability; all of them showed good reliability by exceeding the suggested threshold of 0.70. These findings, together with the Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, demonstrate how well the indicators capture their corresponding dimensions.

Table 3: Initial SEM results.

Construct Code	Indicator	Factor Loading (FL)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
A	A1	0.924	0.928	0.865
	A2	0.936		
B	B1	0.944	0.938	0.884
	B2	0.936		
C	C1	0.810	0.863	0.760
	C2	0.930		
E	E1	0.860	0.854	0.746
	E2	0.867		
P	P1	0.891	0.905	0.827
	P2	0.927		

Note: Acceptable Thresholds: Factor Loading, $CR \geq 0.70$; $AVE \geq 0.50$.

Table 4: Analysis of total effect.

Latent	Code	Description	Reference
Career Success Indicators	C1	Career / Job Satisfaction	[10]
	C2	Promotion / Renumeration	
Academic Success Indicators	A1	Acquisition of Skills and Competencies	[4]
	A2	Attachment of Learning Outcomes	
Psychological Stress Factors	P1	Perfectionism / Fear of Failure	[11]
	P2	Fear of Social Comparison	[3]
Emotional Stress Factors	E1	Physical Health Issues	[5]
	E2	Interpersonal Relationships	
Balanced Career and Academic Performance Indicators	B1	Stress Resiliency	[7]
	B2	Time Management Competency	[8]

Figure 3 shows the initial SEM Model utilized to investigate the factors influencing young professionals between the ages of 24 and 29 in juggling their academic and professional endeavors. It was found that some elements, especially psychological factors, did not exhibit significant connections in this initial model. The researcher used modification indices, a technique suggested by Hair to increase model fit, and performed a covariance analysis to improve the model. These adjustments help reduce differences between the proposed conceptual model and the estimated model. The improved and final SEM is shown in Figure 4.

3.2 Hypothesis Testing

The outcomes of the hypothesis testing offer more details on the correlation between the variables, as shown in Table 4. The p-value signifies the possibility

of achieving the observed results, or if the null hypothesis – that there is no effect or difference – were correct. Statistical significance is generally described as a p-value of below 0.05, which means that there is sufficient data to reject the null hypothesis. However, since a p-value above 0.05 suggests that there is insufficient proof to support it, the null hypothesis is not rejected [12].

In summary, p-values indicate the statistical significance of the relationships among the latent variables. A lower p-value provides stronger evidence that the relationship is unlikely to be due to probability, whereas a higher p-value means weaker evidence against the null hypothesis. There is sufficient proof in Table 4 to recommend that the latent variables under investigation have meaningful associations with one another. Consequently, the null hypothesis was disproved.

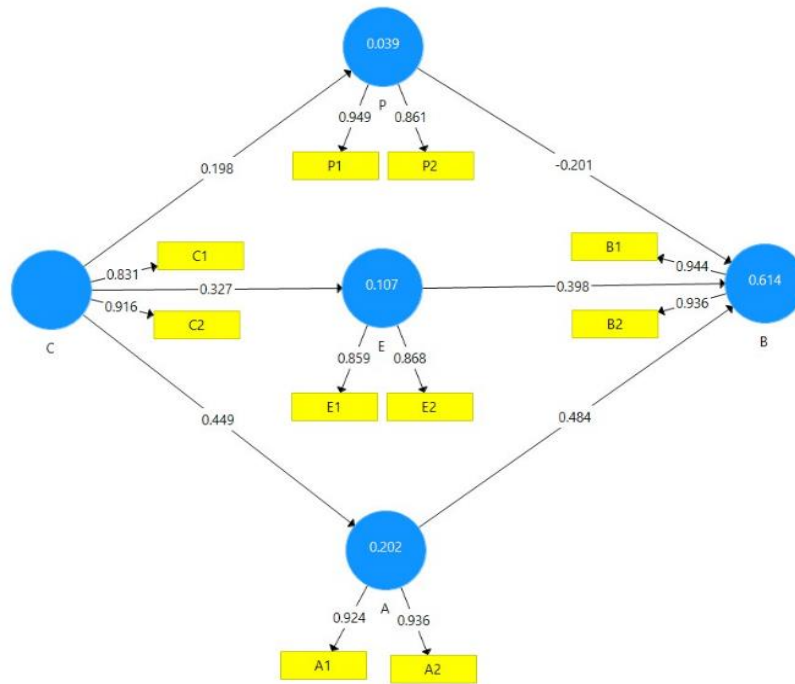


Figure 3: Initial SEM model.

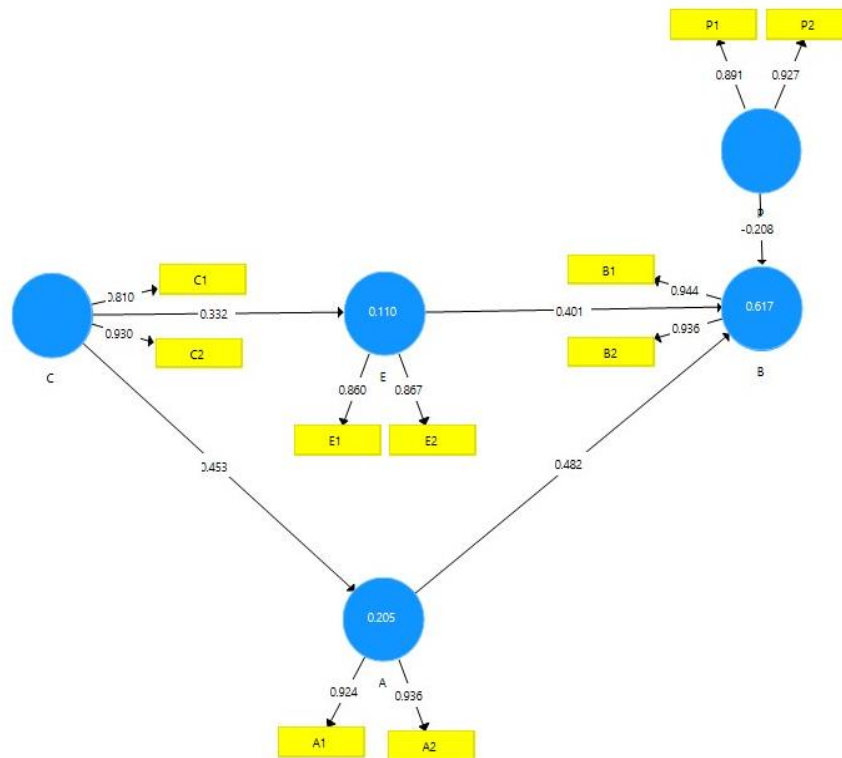


Figure 4: Final SEM model.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the factors influencing the balance between career and academic pursuits among young professionals aged 24–29 using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

The findings indicate that career-related factors significantly influence both academic success and emotional-related factors. Furthermore, academic success and emotional factors were found to have significant effects on balanced career and academic performance. Psychological stress factors also demonstrated a statistically significant, although weaker, relationship with balanced performance.

These results suggest that achieving balance between career and academic responsibilities is shaped by a combination of performance-related factors and stress-related conditions. In particular, the interplay between career development, academic outcomes, and emotional well-being plays a critical role in sustaining this balance.

From a practical perspective, the findings imply that young professionals may benefit from strengthening both their academic competencies and emotional coping mechanisms to effectively manage dual responsibilities. Institutions and employers may also consider providing structured support systems that address both performance demands and stress-related challenges.

However, given the limited sample size, the results should be interpreted with caution. Future research may expand the sample and incorporate additional variables to further validate and refine the proposed model.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Mapúa University and their instructors for the invaluable guidance and encouragement that greatly contributed to the success of this study.

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APPENDIX

Survey Questionnaire:

- 1) Career Success Indicators:
 - I find my current job or career to be fulfilling and meaningful.
 - I am satisfied with the opportunities for career advancement and promotions in my organization.

2) Academic Success Indicators:

- I believe that the curriculum is designed to enhance both subject-specific knowledge and broader skills such as critical thinking and communication.
- I am content that the assessments (exams, projects, etc.) used in my courses effectively measure the attainment of the learning outcomes.

3) Psychological Stress Factors:

- I often set unrealistically high standards for myself, which can lead to stress and anxiety.
- I frequently compare myself to others in terms of appearance, achievements, or success.

4) Emotional Stress Factors:

- I make it a priority to take care of my physical health by staying active and maintaining a balanced diet.
- I have a strong support network of friends and family members with whom I can openly communicate and seek guidance.

5) Balanced Career and Academic Performance Indicators:

- I am generally resilient in the face of stress and can effectively cope with academic and career-related pressures.
- I have a structured daily or weekly routine that helps me manage my academic and career responsibilities effectively.