UiT The Arctic University of Norway

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The Sky is the Limit: Breaking the Glass Ceiling as an Ethnic Minority in Organizations

A quantitative online questionnaire study

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Preface

At the beginning of my master journey, I was eager to dive into some new topics within the field of psychology. Having had some experience within cognitive neuroscience, I was excited to explore the field of work and organizational psychology. Having no idea where to begin, I contacted associate professor Dana Unger who introduced me to several topics within the field. After deciding on my topic of interest, Dana accepted my request for supervision and we got to work. To Dana, I want to thank you for your invaluable guidance and patience.

In combination with my student research program, I knew the master program would be a challenging path. Although rewarding and instructive, this path has been filled with stress, self-doubt, and sacrifice. I want to thank the IPS lunch-club for providing a fun space where I could take a break and embrace my natural role as class clown. I want to thank Lars Borge for collaborating on data-collection for our respective master theses. I want to give a special thanks to Marie Seberg Primdahl, Kornelia van Ingen and Kine Bjørneby Olsen for helpful insights and invitations to home office hours in times where we needed a change of scenery. I want to thank Steffen Rygg Aasen for helpful insight, our internal jokes as office buddies have been cherished throughout our three year together. I want to give a special thanks to Federica Luzzi for her collaboration on my student research project, our friendship and common love for dark humor was invaluable in times of data collection. I also want to give a special thanks to my beautiful girlfriend, Guro Hauboff, for her love and support throughout my entire master journey. I would never have been able to finish my studies without you guys.

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Dana Unger

Samy Babiker

Dr. Dana Unger

The Sky is the Limit: Breaking the Glass Ceiling as an Ethnic Minority in Organizations.

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Supervisor: Dr. Dana Unger

PSY-3900 – Master Thesis in Psychology

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PSY-3900: Master Thesis

Abstract

People with an ethnic minority background are becoming more prevalent in Western societies, and are more represented in the workforce as a consequence. Negative stereotypes and attitudes towards ethnic minorities persist in terms of lack of skill and knowledge that leads to discrimination and negative outcomes in their career progression. These obstacles make a glass ceiling that limit the potential of ethnic minorities to develop their career at the same pace as the ethnic majority. We wanted to investigate whether mentorship and networking could be utilized to break the glass ceiling for ethnic minorities. We regard higher levels of subjective career success as breaking the glass ceiling. In our three-wave study (N = 116), we collected data assessing demographic variables, mentorship quality, networking behavior, and subjective career success. We saw that ethnic minority status predicted higher mentorship quality. Mentorship quality significantly predicted subjective career success, whereas networking behavior predicted subjective career success for mentored participants. We argue that this reflects enhanced quality in networks for mentored participants. Neither mentorship quality nor networking behavior mediated the relationship between ethnic minority status in our hypothesized directions. Future studies should implement longitudinal approaches to study career projection and causal effects of mentorship and networking.

Keywords: class ceiling, ethnic minorities, mentorship, networking, career success

Sammendrag

Folk med etnisk minoritetsbakgrunn blir mer utbredt i vestlige samfunn, og er dermed mer representert på arbeidsmarkedet. Negative stereotyper og holdninger rettet mot etniske minoriteter sine ferdigheter og kunnskaper fører til diskriminering og negative utfall for deres karriereprogresjon. Disse hindringene skaper et glasstak som hemmer potensialet til karriereprogresjon på lik linje med majoriteten. Derfor ville vi undersøke om mentorskap og nettverksbygging kunne brukes til å knuse glasstaket for etniske minoriteter der vi betrakter høyere skårer av subjektiv karrieresuksess som knusing av glasstaket. I vårt tredelte studie (*N* = 116), så samlet vi data som målte demografiske variabler, mentorskapskvalitet, nettverksbyggende atferd, og subjektiv karrieresuksess. Vi så at etnisk minoritetsstatus predikerte høyere mentorskapskvalitet. Mentorskapskvalitet predikerte subjektiv karrieresuksess, mens nettverksbyggende atferd predikerte kun subjektiv karrieresuksess for deltakere som har/hadde mentor. Vi argumenterer for at dette reflekterer økt kvalitet hos nettverkene til deltakere som har/hadde mentor. Hverken mentorskapskvalitet eller nettverksbyggende atferd medierte forholdet mellom etnisk minoritetsstatus og subjektiv karrieresuksess i våres antatte retninger. Fremtidige studier burde implementere longitudinelle tilnærminger for a undersøke karriereutsikt og kausale effekter av mentorskap og nettverksbygging.

Nøkkelord: glasstak, etniske minoriteter, mentorskap, nettverksbygging, karrieresuksess

The Sky is the Limit: Breaking the Glass Ceiling as an Ethnic Minority in Organizations.

Ethnic minorities are more prevalent in industrialized countries than ever before, and are therefore more represented in the labor pool (Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2020; Obenauer & Langer, 2019). However, the proportion of ethnic minorities in leadership positions remains low (Adamovic & Leibbrandt, 2023). Ethnic minorities are commonly defined as individuals that belong to groups that have different national and/or cultural traditions from the main population within the host-country (Conerly et al., 2021). In 2019, 36.4% of the United States' labor pool were ethnic minorities (Adamovic & Leibbrandt, 2023). Despite this fact, only 16.1% of board seats in fortune 500 companies were held by ethnic minorities in 2018 (Adamovic & Leibbrandt, 2023). This tendency of differences in general employment are found in other industrialized countries as well, such as Australia (Adamovic & Leibbrandt, 2023) and Norway (PA Consulting Group, 2023). This trend of differences in representation is hard to justify due to the fact that many ethnic minorities are born, raised and educated in the country they are employed in. Some argue that ethnic minorities suffer from discrimination from the very beginning of their professional careers (Adamovic & Leibbrandt, 2023). Studies show that ethnic minorities receive less invitations for job interviews and entry-level job offers compared to the ethnic majority of the host-country (Booth et al., 2012; Quillian et al., 2019). Alternatively, others would argue that the scarcity of ethnic minority representation in middle/upper management is also due to negative stereotypes associated with ethnic minorities, their lack of social networks and mentoring opportunities at their place of employment (McCarty Kilian et al., 2005; Schoen & Rost, 2021). It is therefore possible that ethnic minorities might face such obstacles throughout their career development, which consequently could lead to an underrepresentation of ethnic minorities at the top of organizations. Although the explanations differ in some regards, both perspectives argue that

ethnic minorities face disadvantages in the workplace. These disadvantages make a “glass ceiling” (Babic & Hansez, 2021; Cotter et al., 2001) that might hinder ethnic minorities from reaching their full professional potential during their respective careers. The many obstacles ethnic minority face in regard to career furtherment are well documented (Cook & Glass, 2014; Maume, 1999; Phelps & Constantine, 2000). However, organizational and personal resources that positively correlate with career furtherment remain unexplored.

In this thesis we look to investigate whether mentorship and networking can be implemented as “hammers” to break the glass ceiling. In our model (Figure 1), we investigate breaking the glass ceiling in terms of higher levels of subjective career success. Based on the literature, we propose that ethnic minority status will be negatively associated with mentorship quality, networking behavior, and subjective career success. We also believe that mentorship quality and networking behavior will mediate the negative indirect effects of ethnic minority status on subjective career success.

We believe that this thesis can contribute to the field of work and organizational psychology by showcasing how ethnic minorities differ in terms of mentorship and networking. We also aim to illuminate mentorship quality and networking behavior as potential tools for overcoming the glass ceiling effects. Lastly, we also hope that this research will contribute to improved workplace policies, in addition to more diversity in middle and upper management.

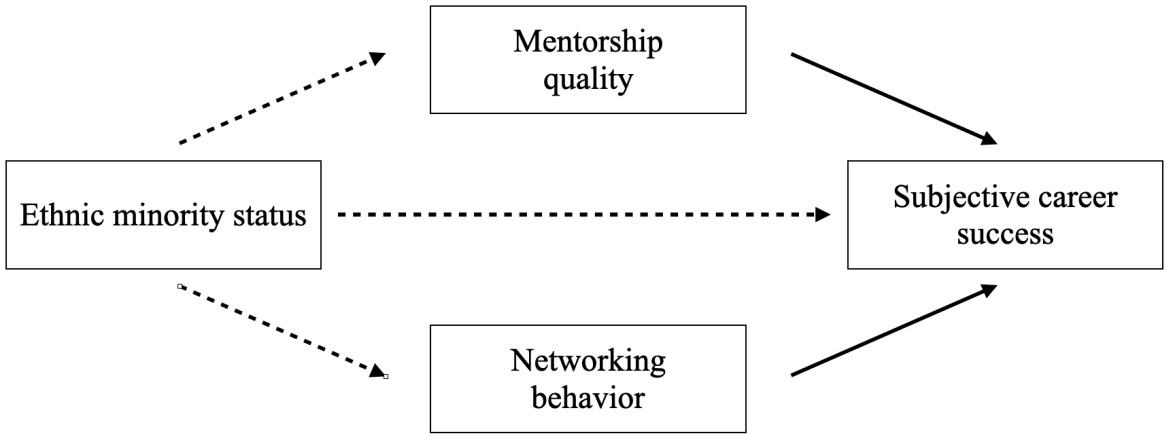

Figure 1. Overview of our research model. The model encompasses all our hypotheses where H1, H3 and H6 are depicted with dashed arrows, whereas H2 and H5 are depicted with solid arrows. The mediation hypotheses (H4 and H7) are depicted in the total model.

The glass ceiling

The term "glass ceiling" is a term used to describe obstacles that employees encounter during career advancement due to differences in name, gender, physical appearance, and culture (Lu et al., 2020). The term derives from research on the obstacles that women face in the workplace that hinder career advancement, thus most of the literature on the glass ceiling study women in the workplace (Johns, 2013). Cotter and colleagues (2001) have argued the glass ceiling is a distinct type of inequality/discrimination, and that there are four criteria that must be met in order to deem something part of the glass ceiling effect.

Their first criterion is that "*[a] glass ceiling inequality represents a gender or racial difference that is not explained by other job-relevant characteristics of the employee*" (Cotter et al., 2001, p.657). This implies that the discrimination must be job-related, and cannot be explained by other factors such as prior experience, educational background, motivation, skill, or accomplishments (Cotter et al., 2001). It is also important to emphasize that discrimination of gender and race can happen at much earlier stages of life where is also affects career trajectories. There is evidence for discrimination of women in STEM fields (Cadaret et al., 2017) and ethnic minority children in school (Weber et al., 2018) that can cause suboptimal

trajectories for later stages such as choosing careers and education. Although these forms of negative stereotypes and discriminations have implications for one's career-choice and career-outcomes, Cotter and colleagues (2001) argue that these effects are *not* related to the glass ceiling effect.

Their second criterion is that "*[a] glass ceiling inequality represents a gender or racial difference that is greater at higher levels of an outcome than at lower levels of an outcome*" (Cotter et al., 2001, p. 658). This criterion insinuates that if the level of discrimination remains constant at all levels of an organization, it should be deemed as labor market discrimination, and *not* an indication of a glass ceiling effect. For example, evidence for a glass ceiling effect in an organization would be reflected in a decreasing percentile of representation on ethnic minorities for each step upwards in the corporate ladder. This criterion for indicating glass ceiling effects has also been implemented in other studies (Duleep & Sanders, 1992; Frankforter, 1996). A counterargument to the second criterion would be that the glass ceiling can also be applied to low-wage workers where the job ladder is very limited (Harlan & Berheide, 1994).

Their third criterion is that "*[a] glass ceiling inequality represents a gender or racial inequality in the changes of advancement into higher levels, not merely the propositions of each gender or race currently at those higher levels*" (Cotter et al., 2001, p.659). In line with this criterion, the implicit leadership theory states that employees evaluate leaders by comparing them to a general leadership prototype, more specifically, comparing them to their perception of what a leader ought to look like and behave (House et al., 1999). Furthermore, due to these leadership prototypes often being associated with Caucasian men, discrimination during the promotion evaluation stages can explain the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in leadership positions (Lu et al., 2020). In addition, research also shows that the cognitive process that underlie implicit leadership theory serves as a negative bias towards

ethnic minority leaders due to negative stereotypes (Junker & Van Dick, 2014; Olsen et al., 2022). Thus, one could assume that many recruiters utilize limited information processing and therefore rely on their generic leadership schemas to aid their decision-making in regard to which applicants they promote to leadership positions. In line with the implicit leadership theory, this decision-making heuristic could act as a disservice towards ethnic minorities in organizations.

Their fourth and last criterion for a glass ceiling effect is "*[a] glass ceiling inequality represents a gender or racial inequality that increases over the course of a career*" (Cotter et al., 2001, p.661). This criterion implies that a ceiling effect would allow some upward movement in one's career, but that in later stages, one's career would become stagnant due to increased levels of discrimination in higher levels of position.

In addition to glass ceiling affecting objective measures of careers in terms of advancement and promotions, the glass ceiling has been shown to increase job strain, as well as decreasing job satisfaction and engagement (Babic & Hansez, 2021). As previously mentioned, we believe that higher levels of subjective career success can be seen as breaking the glass ceiling. We therefore hypothesize that:

H1: ***Ethnic minority status is negatively associated with subjective career success.***

Workplace mentorship

One of the elements in our model that we believe can break the glass ceiling is the guidance of a workplace mentor, or mentorship. A workplace mentor is commonly defined as a more senior/experienced employee that takes an interest in a less experienced employee, often referred to as protégé (Scandura, 1997). Mentors usually have great knowledge, experience, as well as a commitment to further and aid the career success of their protégé(s) (Kram, 1988).

The functions of mentorships are often categorized into either career-related support or psychosocial support (Ghosh & Reio, 2013; Harvey et al., 2010). Career-related support entails implementations that help protégés enhance their furtherment within the organization and their respective careers. Examples of such implementations are exposing protégés to influential people, coaching, handing out challenging assignments, and advocating on the protégé's behalf for opportunities and promotion (Shen & Kram, 2011). Psychosocial support functions entail strengthening the protégé's identity by for example enforcing their feelings of knowledge and success at the workplace (Shen & Kram, 2011).

Kram (1983) believed that mentorship transpires over four stages. The first stage would be initiation, where either the mentor or protégé is selected. The second stage is cultivation, where the mentoring functions peak and both parties recognize the benefits of the relationship. The third stage is separation, which is where the relationship ends due to either job change or relocation. The fourth and last stage would be redefinition, where the mentoring relationship develops into a peer-like friendship. The development and duration of these stages may vary depending on the formality of the mentoring relationship. Informal mentoring relationships take place organically, without the assistance or encouragement from the organization, due to perceived competence and capability as well as interpersonal comfort (Eby et al., 2013).

Formal mentoring relationships are more structured where mentor and protégé are assigned to each other by the organization with a specific organizational goal in mind (Kram, 1983). Formal and informal mentoring tend to differ a lot in terms of duration, where formal relationships usually last around a year, whereas informal relationships can often last over 5 years (Kram, 1988). Research suggests that mentors and protégés typically prefer the informal relationships where they have the autonomy to personally select their mentor/protégés (Chao et al., 1992). In addition, when comparing formality, research also suggests that informal

mentoring has a higher likelihood to result in positive outcomes in regards to the previously mentioned mentorship functions of career-related support and psychosocial support (Underhill, 2006). Informal mentorship is also less likely to result in negative mentoring experiences (Eby et al., 2013).

Workplace mentorship and career success

Fadil and colleagues (2009, p.412) defined career success as "*the positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievements one has accumulated as a result of one's work experiences*". In recent times, it has become common to differentiate between objective and subjective career success (Ng et al., 2005). Objective career success is typically based on observable accomplishments that can be accurately judged by others (Wolff & Moser, 2009). Subjective career success is appraised by the individual, and is usually affected by factor such as individual goals, social comparison to peers, well-being and perceived opportunity of advancement (Wolff & Moser, 2009).

Allen and colleagues (2004) stated that previous research regarding the positive effects of mentoring for protégés can be divided further into two types of studies: there are studies that compare outcomes for protégés versus non-protégés, and studies that investigate the associations between mentoring functions and protégé outcomes. The latter studies' outcomes can be further categorized into objective career outcomes, and subjective career outcomes.

In concern to objective outcomes, previous research indicate that mentorship is associated with higher likelihood of rapid advancement/promotions (Turban et al., 2017), increase in pay (Chao et al., 1992), positive performance evaluations (Carter & Youssef-Morgan, 2019), and greater position power (Scandura, 1992). Research also indicate that subjective outcomes linked to mentorship are for example increased organizational commitment (Ragins et al., 2017), job satisfaction (Harris et al., 2007), career satisfaction (St-Jean & Mathieu, 2015), and confidence in career progression (Underhill, 2006). Mentoring

has also been linked to less turnover intentions (Park et al., 2016), work-family struggles (Liu et al., 2012), as well as reduced levels of stress and burnout (Thomas & Lankau, 2009). However, most of the results from research regarding mentoring outcomes were found via cross-sectional research, which entails only collecting data once (Ivey & Dupré, 2022). Even so, the results are further supported by several meta-analyses that highlight the positive effects of mentorship (Allen et al., 2004; Eby et al., 2013; Underhill, 2006). Also, Allen and colleagues' (2004) study highlights that mentoring has more effect on subjective career outcomes in comparison to objective career outcomes.

Based on the existing literature regarding mentorship in the workplace, we hypothesize that:

H2: ***Mentorship quality is positively associated with higher subjective career success***.

Mentorship prevalence, and accessibility for ethnic minorities

The effects of workplace mentorship has been researched across several settings and countries all over the globe, which suggests that workplace mentorship is a cross-cultural phenomenon (Kay & Wallace, 2009; Liang & Gong, 2013). The prevalence of mentoring is hard to determine, which is especially true for informal relationships, although research indicates that they range widely (Hurst & Eby, 2012, p.81-94). In for example Finland, the mentoring rates differed in respects to organizational size across 152 organizations (Laiho & Brandt, 2012). In the organizations that offered formal mentorships, the offer applied less than 10% of employees in 56% of medium-sized organizations, as well as 87% in larger organizations (Laiho & Brandt, 2012). In addition, in 57% of the organizations in the study, mentorship programs applied for maximum 5% of employees. Thus, research indicates that even though mentoring is widely applied in organizational settings across the world, only a small minority of employees actually receive mentoring. In addition, the aforementioned research does not differentiate based on the quality of mentor-protégé relationships, which suggests that the prevalence of effective mentoring relationships is even smaller.

Most of the literature that discuss access to mentorship opportunities highlight the obstacles experienced by women and racial minorities. Up until the 90's, research directed attention towards the difficulties women experience in the mentorship arena (Ragins & Cotton, 1991). However, Ragins and Cotton (1991), as well as Kay and Wallace (2009), found that although women perceive more obstacles in pursuit of mentors, they do not differ from men in terms of actual access to mentorship.

As for racial minorities, it has been suggested that the shortage of mentors and role models is a key factor to explain the barrier for advancement of non-Caucasian employees (Ivey & Dupré, 2022). Although several studies have highlighted the benefits of mentorship of protégés, cross-cultural, cross-racial, and cross gender mentoring can potentially spark irrational fears and beliefs due to perceived race and sex taboos (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004). Thomas (1993) argued that sexual taboos in regards to Caucasian men and African American women can cause a tension that negatively affects the mentoring relationship. However, Palmer and Johnson-Bailey (2008) argue that African American women and women in general can benefit from mentorship from Caucasian men due to the fact that Caucasian men are typically the ones with power and influence within organizations.

Numerous studies suggest that the mentor-protégé relationship and process work best when the mentor and protégé share similarities such as cultural background and beliefs, as well as values and experiences (Dreher & Cox, 1996). Unfortunately, the reality is that the power brokers and decision makers in organizations are typically Caucasian men, which is why Palmer & Johnson-Bailey (2008) argues that they must be trained on how to mentor across differences in culture, ethnicity and genders. Based on the literature, we hypothesize that:

H3: ***Ethnic minority status is negatively associated with mentorship quality.***

In addition, we believe that mentorship quality can mediate the negative relationship between ethnic minority status and subjective career success (H1). Therefore, we also hypothesize that:

H4: ***Mentorship quality will mediate the negative indirect effect of ethnic minority status on subjective career success.***

Networking

Moving on from mentorship, the other "hammer" in our model that we believe can break the class ceiling is networking. Networking can be regarded as a set of interrelated behaviors that are typically showcased by individuals (Frese et al., 1997). Therefore, networking has typically been appraised by measuring a wide set of specific networking behaviors (Wolff & Moser, 2009). Some examples of networking behaviors are going out for drinks with co-workers after work, introducing yourself to colleagues, and exchanging information regarding work and career. There are several ways to describe networking, but there are many common characteristics between the different ways to conceptualize networking (Gibson et al., 2014).

One of the first characteristics of networking is the differentiation of internal and external networking. Internal networking refers to networking behaviors between members withing an organization, whereas external networking refers to networking outside of an organization (Gibson et al., 2014). Wolff and Moser (2009) suggested that internal networking is more beneficial in terms of career success, yet Gibson and colleagues (2014) argued that the benefits of external networking would be better highlighted in occupations where mobility and industry competition is more prevalent. Moreover, Wolff and Moser (2010) showcased that internal and external networking are associated with different outcomes. They found that internal networking was more associated to internal promotions

within the organization, whereas external networking was associated with job change (Wolff & Moser, 2010).

Another characteristic of networking is the development of relations (Gibson et al., 2014). Some definitions emphasize the establishment and maintenance of relationships, while others highlight the use of established contacts (Gibson et al., 2014). This perception of networking implies that it is an active and continuous process which entails more than just coming in contact with new people (Gibson et al., 2014). Gibson and colleagues (2014) emphasized that one cannot simply distinguish between existing and non-existing relationships in regards to networking. One must rather appraise relationships on the dimensions of quality and usefulness. Thus, relations will vary from each other in strength dependent on context and time (Gibson et al., 2014). Lastly, Gibson and colleagues (2014) argued that the goal-directed aspect of networking is an essential addition to the definition in order to differentiate it from other social interactions.

Based on the three characteristics of networking mentioned above, Gibson and colleagues (2014, p.150) defines networking as "*a form of goal-directed behavior, both inside and outside of an organization, focused on creating, cultivating, and utilizing interpersonal relationships*".

Networking and career success

Numerous studies have showcased the effects of networking on career success. Michael and Yukl (1993) showcased that networking was associated with the number of promotions one received throughout one's career, while Langford (2000) revealed that networking was associated with perceived career success. Furthermore, Wolff & Moser (2009) found that networking was not only correlated with current salary and career satisfaction, it was also correlated with salary growth over time.

Although several studies highlight the positive correlation between networking and career success, it is important to specify *why* networking is associated with career success. Many believe that one of the main features of networking that results in career success is access to information (Fadil et al., 2009; Gibson et al., 2014). It is believed that networks of large quality and quantity give one access to information regarding new job openings, subtle organizational developments in politics, as well as a more extensive comprehension in regards of contexts that are crucial to one's functioning (Gibson et al., 2014). In line with this, Seidel and colleagues (2000) found that social links contributed to better salary negotiation outcomes for employees. They further argued that information from influential colleagues that was not available to every employee could be utilized to negotiate higher salaries (Seidel et al., 2000). Furthermore, it is also important to acknowledge *how* people network in order to attain career success. Judge and Bretz (1994) found that supervisor-focused ingratiation tactics were related to more career success, whereas self-promotion resulted in less career success. This finding might imply that networking is associated with career success due to simply being on good terms with affluential people that can impact one's career (Gibson et al., 2014). Thus, effective networking can be attributed to accessing limited information and knowing the right people. Based on previous literature, we hypothesize that:

H5: ***Networking behavior is positively associated with more subjective career success.***

Ethnic minority status, networking and career success

Employees within an organization form many different groups based on interactions needed for work-related tasks (Fadil et al., 2009). These interactions can result in both formal and informal social networks that can be utilized for both organizational and personal goals (Fadil et al., 2009). McGuire (2000) argued that strong network ties, regardless of formality, have often been perceived as a tool which provides critical information that is essential for career success. Research also shows that networking among employees within an organization

increases career opportunities via access of information (Fadil et al., 2009). It was also highlighted that more network participation increases the likelihood of attaining critical information (Fadil et al., 2009). Furthermore, limited network access has been shown to produce several negative outcomes, such as restricted knowledge on organizational updates, and difficulties in forming relations (Ibarra, 1995). Seibert and colleagues (2001) found that individuals that hold stronger positions in networks have a stronger likelihood in accessing key resources. Such individuals are also more likely to be connected with other powerful individuals in the network, which can result in more and better knowledge compared to less central individuals (Seibert et al., 2001)

Several studies show that employees tend to take demographic variables such as race, gender and age into account when forming informal networks (McGuire, 2000; Sparrowe et al., 2001). Many researchers believe that preference for homogeneity, interacting with similar others, is one of the main factors that has kept individuals excluded from informal networks (Granovetter, 1983). Studies also show that homogeneous relations are stronger than heterogeneous relations which is believed to be due to the intimacy that similarities encourage (Granovetter, 1983; Marsden, 1987). Similarities in personal characteristics imply similar interests and views, which again results in forming social ties based on attraction (Combs, 2003).

These social homogeneous networks within the organization make communication easier and strengthens instrumental connections. Kanter (2003) found that the development of exclusive social networks rooted in similarities of personal characteristics has limited access and participation for women and ethnic minorities in the organization's most influential networks. Furthermore, studies have showcased the prevalence of homogeneous social climate within organizations and its adverse outcomes for ethnic minorities in regards to

employment (Segrest Purkiss et al., 2006), opportunities (Moody et al., 2003), and career advancement (Combs, 2003). Based on these findings we hypothesize that:

H6: ***Ethnic minority status is negatively associated with networking behavior.***

In addition, we believe that networking behavior can mediate the negative relationship between ethnic minority status and subjective career success (H1). Therefore, we also hypothesize that:

H7: ***Networking behavior will mediate the negative indirect effect of ethnic minority status on subjective career success.***

Method

Recruitment and Procedure

The data used in this thesis was collected in a larger study. The study consisted of a three-wave online questionnaire administered through Qualtrics (https://www.qualtrics.com/uk/) where participation was anonymous. I, together with another student and our supervisor, recruited participants via Prolific.com, which is a platform where researchers can recruit verified participants that take part in studies in exchange for money. Participants who were willing to take part in our study were informed that the study was a survey regarding well-being at work and careers. Participants were told that we would collect data regarding their working conditions, work/career experiences, as well as some demographic information (age, gender, ethnic background, etc.). They were also informed that they would have to take a screening survey where we would assess their eligibility, that they would be compensated with £0.35 for the screening questionnaire, £1.55 for each of the three main questionnaires, as well as a bonus of £4 for completing all three questionnaires (meaning a total of £9 for completing the entire study). They were also informed that there would be an interval of one week between each questionnaire. Participants who took part in the study were first screened based on three exclusion criteria: participants had to be within

working age, reside in the United Kingdom, and have an organizational work contract of 100%.

We started the study distribution of the screening and first questionnaire on November 29th 2023, and we had completed data collection in the middle of January 2024. Participants who completed the screening questionnaire and were eligible for our study were automatically taken to our first questionnaire (T1). T1, the second questionnaire (T2) and the third questionnaire (T3) were administered with 1-week time lags, respectively. When accessing the questionnaire, participants were first given some general information regarding the study at hand. Participants provided informed consent where they were informed that the study was voluntary, anonymous, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Prolific provides a unique serial number which we cannot link to participants' personal data. Participants were instructed to enter this serial number at the end of each questionnaire for us to merge the questionnaires in our full dataset. The study was approved by Sikt (https://sikt.no/).

Participants

Out of the 217 participants that answered the screening questionnaire, 121 participants completed all three questionnaires. After screening out those who failed to answer correctly on our attention checks, as well as answering all relevant questions, we had a final sample size of $N = 116$ participants (response rate = 53.46%). In total, 59 (50.9%) participants identified as female and 57 (49.1%) identified as male. The mean age of participants was 38.53 ($SD = 10.48$, range: 21-61). Eighty nine (76.7%) of our participants identified as white British, whereas twenty seven (23.1%) did not. Out of those who did not identify as white British, eight identified as other white (6.9%), three identified as British Asian (2.6%), three identified as British Indian (2.6%), two identified as mixed (white and Asian, 1.7%), two identified as British Chinese (1.7%), two identified as Black African British (1.7%), one

identified as white Irish (0.9%), one identified as British Pakistani (0.9%), one identified as Black Caribbean British (0.9%), one identified as Chinese (0.9%), one identified as Filipino (0.9%), one identified as Sri Lankan (0.9%), and one identified as Turkish (0.9%). The majority (57.8%) of participants had completed higher education, where 33.6% had a bachelor's degree, 21.6% had a master's degree, and 2.6% had a doctorate degree. On average, our participants had a tenure of 7.84 years (*SD* = 8.22, ranging from 0 to 39 years) at their current employer.

Materials

Ethnic minority status

Ethnicity was assessed by asking "*what is your ethnic group?*". The options to this question were "*White British*", "*White Irish*", "*Other White*", "*White Gypsy or Irish traveler*", "*Mixed/Multiple – White and Black Caribbean*", "*Mixed/Multiple – White and Black African*", "*Mixed/Multiple – White and Asian*", "*Mixed/Multiple – Other*", "*Asian/Asian British Indian*", "*Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi*", "*Asian/Asian British Pakistani*", "*Asian/Asian British Chinese*", "*Asian/Asian British – Other*", "*Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – Caribbean*", "*Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – African*", "*Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – Other*", and "*Other ethnic group, please specify*.

In our statistical analyses, minority status was treated as a dichotomous variable where participants that checked "*White British*" were the ethnic majority, whereas all other answers were regarded as having ethnic minority status.

Mentorship

For assessing mentorship for participants, we first asked participants two "*yes/no*" questions regarding whether they had ever had a mentor (whether formal or informal), and if they currently have a mentor. Regardless of the answers given on the questions above, all

participants were asked regarding mentorship quality using the Mentoring Functions Questionnaire (MFQ-15) found in Scandura and Ragins' study (1993). The scale consists of 15 items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$) comprising psychosocial support (e.g. "*I exchange confidences with my mentor.*"), career development (e.g., "*My mentor gives me special coaching on the job.*"), and role modeling (e.g., "*I admire my mentor's ability to motivate others.*") of mentors. Participants' responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. In our statistical analyses, we calculated the mean score of the total questionnaire to access networking behavior for each participant.

Networking

To assess participants' networking behavior, we used the English version of the networking scales found in Wolff and Moser's (2009) study. The total scale consists of 44 items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$). The first 22 items appraise internal networking behaviors building contacts (e.g., "*I use company events to make new contacts.*"), maintaining contacts (e.g., "*During breaks, I also discuss business matters with colleagues from other departments.*"), and using contacts (e.g., "*I use my contacts with colleagues in other departments in order to get confidential advice in business matters.*"). The other 22 items appraise external networking behaviors building contacts (e.g., "*I use business trips or training programs to build new contacts.*"), maintaining contact (e.g., "*I use my contacts outside my company, to ask for business advice.*"), and using contacts (e.g., "*When I hear of an interesting job opening in another company, I contact business acquaintances from other organizations.*"). Participants' responses were based on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Never/very seldom* to 4 = *Very often/always*. In our statistical analyses, we calculated the mean score of the total questionnaire to access networking behavior.

Subjective career success

For assessing subjective career success for participants, we utilized the subjective career success scale developed by Shockley and colleagues (2016). The scale consists of 24 items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$). The items can be further categorized into 8 subscales consisting of recognition (e.g., "*Considering my career as a whole, my supervisor have told me I do a good job.*"), quality work (e.g., "*Considering my career as a whole, I have met the highest standards of quality in my work.*"), meaningful work (e.g., "*Considering my career as a whole, I think my work has been meaningful.*"), influence (e.g., "*Considering my career as a whole, decisions that I have made have impacted my organization.*"), authenticity (e.g., "*Considering my career as a whole, I have felt as though I am in charge of my own career.*"), personal life (e.g., "*Considering my career as a whole, I have been able to have a satisfying life outside of work.*"), growth and development (e.g., "*Considering my career as a whole, I have expanded my skill sets to perform better.*"), and satisfaction (e.g., "*Considering my career as a whole, my career is personally satisfying.*"). In our statistical analyses, we calculated the mean score of the total questionnaire to access networking behavior for each participant. Participants' responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *I do not agree at all* to 5 = *I fully agree*. In our statistical analyses, we calculated the mean score of the total questionnaire to access subjective career success for each participant.

Control variables

In addition to our main variables, we added the control variables of age, tenure, organizational size, gender, and educational level. We added these control variables since they can potentially account for subjective career success outside of mentorship and networking. Previous studies investigating the relation between mentorship and career success (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008), as well as networking and career success (Wolff & Moser, 2009) have also utilized these control variables. For age and tenure, participants were

asked to indicate their birthyear and date of employment. These variables were later coded into number of years. For organizational size, the scale raged from 1 ("*1-50 employees*") to 6 ("*more than 6000 employees*"). For gender: 1 = male and 2 = female. Lastly, educational level ranged from 1 ("*No educational qualification*") to 8 ("*Doctorate degree (e.g., EdD, PhD)*").

Statistical analyses

In order to test our research model and its hypotheses, we utilized the PROCESS macro (v4.2) (Hayes, 2022) to run hierarchical regression analyses. To test our full model with mediations, we used Model 4 of the PROCESS macro. The number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals was set at 10000, as recommended by Hayes (2022).

Results

Correlations

Our full correlation analysis with our main variables and control variables is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlation analysis for all study variables with all participants (N =116)

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Ethnic minority status	-								
2. Networking behavior	.13	-							
3. Mentorship quality	.19*	.40**	-						
4. Subjective career success	.00	.26**	.36**	-					
5. Age	-.08	-.23*	-.22*	-.03	-				
6. Tenure	-.16	-.14	.08	.15	.53**	-			
7. Organization size	-.08	-.16	-.19*	.01	.07	.11	-		
8. Gender	.01	.06	-.19*	.20*	-.21*	.01	-.04	-	
9. Educational level	.23*	.11	.08	.17	-.22*	-30**	.19*	.15	-

Note. Correlation analysis with Pearson's *r*. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

Contrary to what we believed, we found no correlation between ethnic minority status and subjective career success (r = .00, p = 1.000). However, we found a moderate positive correlation between mentorship quality and subjective career success where higher ratings of mentorship quality was associated with higher ratings of subjective career success (r = .36, p < .001). Surprisingly, we found a weak correlation between ethnic minority status and mentorship quality where ethnic minority status was associated with higher ratings of mentorship quality compared to ethnic minority (r = .19, p = .037). This correlation goes in the opposite direction of what we believed it would prior to data analysis.

We also found a weak positive correlation between networking behavior and subjective career success, where higher ratings of networking behavior were associated with higher ratings of subjective career success (r = .26, p = .005). However, we found no significant correlation between ethnic minority status and networking behavior (r = .13, p = .179).

Hypothesis testing

To test our research model found in Figure 1, we ran regression analyses with PROCESS macro using model 4 (see Figure 2). We had Ethnic minority status as independent variable, Subjective career success as dependent variable, and Mentorship and Networking were both included as mediators. Thus, we investigated the direct path of ethnic minority status to subjective career success, and the indirect path through our mediators. In addition to our main variables of ethnic minority status, networking, mentorship, and subjective career success, we added the control variables of age, tenure, organization size, and gender throughout the model testing.

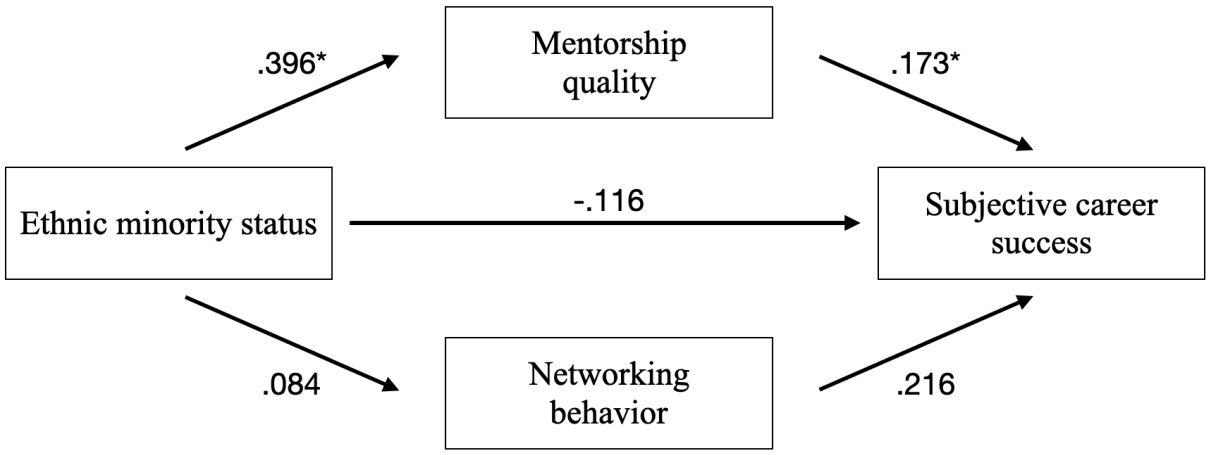

Figure 2. Our research model with complementary coefficients from our hierarchical regression analyses with all participants (N = 116), *p < .05

In H1, we hypothesized that ethnic minority status would be associated negatively with subjective career success. However, in our hierarchical regression analysis, ethnic minority status did *not* predict ratings of subjective career success (b = -.116, SE = .119, p = .332). We therefore rejected H1. We further hypothesized in H2 that mentorship quality would be positively associated with higher levels of subjective career success. We found that mentorship quality did predict subjective career success where higher ratings of mentorship quality predicted higher levels of subjective career success (b = .173, SE = .062, p = .006). This finding confirms our hypothesis, therefore we kept H2. In addition, none of the control variables significantly predicted career success in our analysis for subjective career success (see Table 2).

Table 2

Hierarchical regression predicting Subjective career success for all participants (N = 116)

Variable	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.00	.454	4.41	<.001**	1.10	2.91
Ethnic minority status	-.116	.119	-.974	.332	-.352	.120
Mentorship quality	.173	.062	2.79	.006*	.050	.296
Networking behavior	.216	.125	1.73	.086	-.031	.463
Age	.002	.006	.345	.731	-.010	.013
Tenure	.011	.008	1.48	.141	-.004	.026
Organization size	.010	.025	.404	.687	-.040	.060
Gender	.131	.100	1.30	.195	-.068	.329
Educational level	.079	.041	1.93	.057	-.002	.160

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .001$

Furthermore, in H3, we hypothesized that ethnic minority status would be negatively associated with mentorship quality. However, we saw a significant result in the opposite direction where ethnic minority status predicted higher levels of mentorship quality ($b = .396$, $SE = .193$, $p = .043$). This result contradicts our hypothesis, therefore we rejected H3. In H4 we hypothesized that mentorship quality would mediate the negative indirect effects of ethnic minority status on subjective career success. The indirect effects of ethnic minority status through mentorship quality on subjective career success was significant within the 95% confidence interval since it did not contain zero ($b_{ind} = .068$, 95% CI [.007, .150]). This result was in the opposite direction of what we hypothesized, therefore we rejected H4. As for the control variables in the analysis of ethnic minority status and mentorship quality, we saw that age, tenure, and organization size significantly predicted mentorship quality (see Table 4).

Table 3

Hierarchical regression predicting Mentorship quality for all participants (N = 116)

Variable	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.63	.571	6.36	<.001**	2.50	4.76
Ethnic minority status	.396	.193	2.05	.043*	.014	.777
Age	-.028	009	-3.05	.003*	-.046	-.010
Tenure	.035	.012	2.99	.004*	.012	.059
Organization size	-.091	.041	-2.25	.027*	-.171	-.011
Gender	.177	.164	1.08	.282	-.148	.503
Educational level	.056	.067	.831	.408	-.077	.189

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .001$

Moving on to networking behavior, in H5 we hypothesized that networking behavior would be positively associated with subjective career success. Our analysis revealed that there was no significant relationship between networking behavior and subjective career success ($b = .216$, $SE = .125$, $p = .086$). We therefore reject H5. In H6, we hypothesized that ethnic minority status would be negatively associated with networking behavior. However, we found no differences between ethnic minorities and those of the ethnic majority in regards to networking behavior ($b = .084$, $SE = .096$, $p = .384$). We therefore reject H6. Lastly, in H7 we hypothesized that networking behavior would mediate the negative effect of ethnic minority status on subjective career success. The indirect effect of ethnic minority status through networking behavior was not significant within the 95% confidence interval since it contained zero ($b_{ind} = .018$, 95% CI [-.036, .080]). Therefore, we reject H7. As for the control variables in the analysis of ethnic minority status and networking behavior, none of the control variables significantly predicted networking behavior (see Table 4).

Table 4

Hierarchical regression predicting Networking behavior for all participants (N = 116)

Variable	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.28	.284	8.01	<.001**	1.71	2.84
Ethnic minority status	.084	.096	.874	.384	-.106	.274
Age	-.009	.005	-1.87	.065	-.018	.001
Tenure	.001	.006	.233	.816	-.010	.013
Organization size	-.033	.020	-1.63	.106	-.073	.007
Gender	-.002	.082	-.018	.985	-.163	.160
Educational level	.025	.033	.751	.455	-.041	.091

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .001$

Robustness check for correlation analysis

Due to the puzzling correlations between ethnic minority status and mentorship quality, we thought it would be of relevance to see if these results would remain the same if we ran identical analyses for participants that reported having been mentored ($n = 72$). We argue that this would improve the validity of the results in regards to mentorship quality. All of these correlation can be found in Table 5.

Table 5

Correlation analysis for all study variables with mentored participants (n = 72)

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Ethnic minority status	-								
2. Networking behavior	.07	-							
3. Mentorship quality	.19	.31**	-						
4. Subjective career success	-.06	.34**	.41**	-					
5. Age	-.11	-.12	-.16	.03	-				
6. Tenure	-.19	-.11	.14	.11	.54**	-			
7. Organization size	-.23	-.06	-.15	.08	.04	-.05	-		
8. Gender	.04	.03	.29*	.18	-.25*	-.05	-.05	-	
9. Educational level	.31**	.10	-.03	.22	-.30*	-.38**	.30**	.28*	-

Note. Correlation analysis with Pearson's *r*. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

Similar to the previous correlation analysis, we found no correlation between ethnic minority status and subjective career success ($r = -.06$, $p = .644$). We also found a similar positive moderate correlation between mentorship quality and subjective career ($r = .41$, $p < .001$). Contrary to our initial analysis, we did *not* find a significant correlation between ethnic minority status and mentorship quality ($r = .19$, $p = .114$). Similar to our initial analysis, we found a significant moderate positive correlation between networking behavior and subjective career success ($r = .34$, $p = .003$). In addition we found no significant correlation between networking and ethnic minority status ($r = .07$, $p = .553$).

Robustness check for hypothesis testing

As with the correlation analysis, we found some puzzling results regarding the relation between ethnic minority status and mentorship quality, we therefore ran identical analyses for participants that reported having been mentored (see Figure 3, $n = 72$).

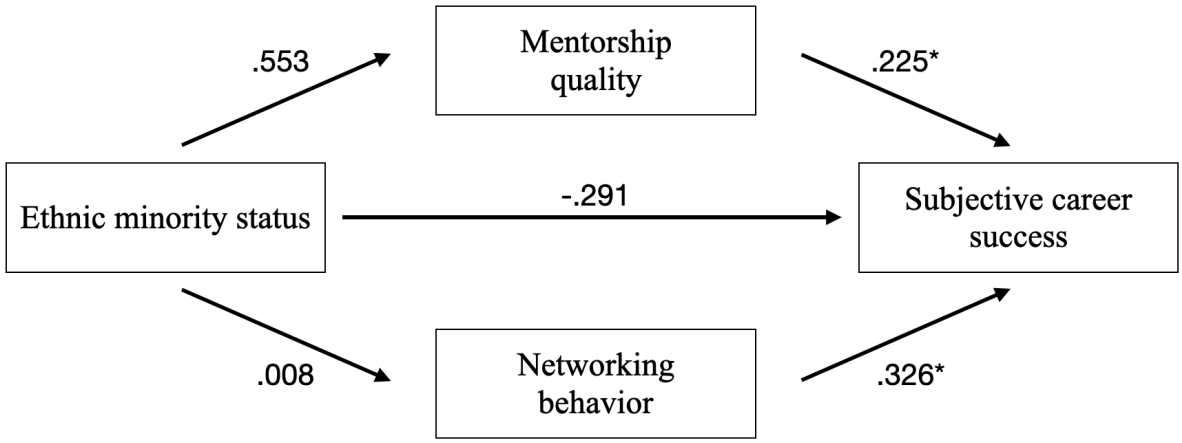

Figure 3. Our research model with complementary coefficients from our hierarchical regression analyses with mentored participants ($n = 72$), * = $p < .05$

As we registered in our initial analysis, ethnic minority status did not significantly predict subjective career success ($b = -.291$, $SE = .155$, $p = .065$). Although we see a trend in out hypothesized direction, we still rejected H1. In line with our initial results and H2, we still see that higher levels of mentorship quality significantly predicted higher levels of subjective career success ($b = .225$, $SE = .070$, $p = .002$). For our control variables, we also found that for mentored participants, educational level significantly predicted subjective career success (results for all control variables in Table 6).

Table 6

Hierarchical regression predicting Subjective career success for mentored participants (n = 72)

Variable	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	1.22	.563	2.17	.034*	.098	2.35
Ethnic minority status	-.291	.155	-1.88	.065	-.600	.019
Mentorship quality	.225	.070	3.23	.002*	.086	.364
Networking behavior	.326	.155	2.10	.040*	.016	.636
Age	.008	.007	1.15	.254	-.006	.022
Tenure	.007	.010	.662	.510	-.013	.027
Organization size	-.003	.032	-.093	.926	-.067	.061
Gender	.006	.131	.044	.965	-.255	.267
Educational level	.163	.062	2.66	.010*	.040	.286

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .001$

In contrast to our initial results, ethnic minority status did *not* significantly predict higher levels of mentorship quality ($b = .553$, $SE = .284$, $p = .055$). Although there is a trend in the similar direction of the initial analysis, it is not significant. Again, we still found no evidence for H3, therefore we rejected it. In the robustness check, the indirect effects of ethnic minority status through mentorship quality on subjective career success was *not* significant within the 95% confidence interval since it contained zero ($b_{ind} = .125$, 95% CI [-.005, .286]). Thus, we still found no evidence for H4, and it remained rejected. As for the control variables in the analysis of ethnic minority status and mentorship quality for mentored participants, we saw that tenure and gender significantly predicted mentorship quality (see Table 7).

Table 7

Hierarchical regression predicting Mentorship quality for mentored participants (n = 72)

Variable	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.62	.853	4.25	<.001**	1.92	5.33
Ethnic minority status	.553	.284	1.95	.055	-.013	1.12
Age	-.025	.013	-1.88	.064	-.051	.002
Tenure	.037	.018	2.05	.044*	.001	.074
Organization size	-.005	.060	-.082	.935	-.126	.116
Gender	.521	.237	2.20	.032*	.047	.995
Educational level	-.112	.115	-.975	.333	-.341	.117

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .001$

In contrast to our initial results, higher levels of networking behavior did predict higher levels of subjective career success for mentored participants ($b = .326$, $SE = .155$, $p = .040$). Although significant in our hypothesized direction, networking behavior only significantly predicts subjective career success in mentored participants. This result is certainly interesting, but we still rejected H5. Similarly to our initial results, ethnic minority status did not predict networking behavior ($b = .008$, $SE = .127$, $p = .948$). Thus, we still rejected H6. . In the robustness check, the indirect effects of ethnic minority status through networking behavior on subjective career success was *not* significant within the 95% confidence interval since it contained zero ($b_{ind} = .003$, 95% CI [-.093, .116]). Thus, we still rejected H7. As in our initial results, none of the control variables significantly predicted networking behavior (see Table 8).

Table 8

Hierarchical regression predicting Networking behavior for mentored participants (n = 72)

Variable	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.09	.383	5.45	<.001**	1.32	2.85
Ethnic minority status	.008	.127	.065	.948	-.246	.263
Age	-.003	.006	-.424	.673	-.014	.009
Tenure	-.003	.008	-.312	.756	-.019	.014
Organization size	-.017	.027	-.619	.538	-.071	.037
Gender	-.011	.106	-.107	.915	-.224	.201
Educational level	.028	.052	.542	.590	-.075	.131

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .001$

Discussion

In this thesis, we aimed to study the glass ceiling effect by investigating whether ethnic minority status was associated with lower levels of subjective career success. We also wanted to investigate whether mentorship and networking could be implemented as "hammers" to break the glass ceiling for ethnic minorities. In order to test our research model (figure 1), we collected data in a three-wave study where we gathered information regarding demographics, networking behavior, mentorship quality, and subjective career success through online questionnaires.

In our hierarchical regression analysis, we found no evidence for H1, where we proposed that ethnic minority status would be negatively associated with career success. Therefore, we rejected H1. Furthermore, we saw that mentorship quality predicted subjective career success where higher levels of mentorship quality predicted higher levels of subjective career success. This finding is in line with what we hypothesized in H2, leading us to accept the hypothesis. However, in our initial analysis, we found that ethnic minority status predicted higher levels of mentorship quality. This is in the opposite direction of what we hypothesized

in H3 where we thought ethnic minority status would predict lower levels of mentorship quality. Due to the puzzling result, we found it necessary to check the robustness of this finding by replicating the analysis with mentored participants. The trend of ethnic minority status and higher mentorship quality was still there, but it was not significant. Regardless of the robustness check, we found no evidence for our hypothesis, and we therefore reject H3. In H4 we hypothesized that mentorship quality would mediate the negative indirect effect of ethnic minority status on subjective career success. We found that ethnic minority status significantly predicted higher levels of career success indirectly through mentorship quality, which is in the opposite direction of what we hypothesized. Thus, we reject H4.

In regards to networking behavior, we hypothesized in H5 that networking behavior would be positively associated with subjective career success. We saw a trend in the hypothesized direction, but we failed to find any significant effect of networking behavior in predicting subjective career success. However, in our robustness check we found that higher levels of networking behavior significantly predicted higher levels of subjective career success for mentored participants. Regardless of this, we still reject H5. We also hypothesized in H6 that ethnic minority status would be associated negatively with networking behavior. We found no evidence for this in our analysis, therefore we reject H6. Lastly, we hypothesized in H7 that networking behavior would mediate the negative effect of ethnic minority status on subjective career success. However, we found no evidence for this in our analysis, and we therefore reject H7.

Ethnic minority status and subjective career success

Previous research shows that the glass ceiling has served as an obstacle for ethnic minorities in terms of career progression and career success (Adamovic & Leibbrandt, 2023; Baert et al., 2016; Cotter et al., 2001). In our analysis, we did not see any differences between ethnic minorities and the majority population on ratings of career success. Although we would

love to say that these phenomena are a thing of the past and that there are no racial differences in terms of preference, evaluation and career furtherment/success, we do not believe that this is the case. In our study, only 27 of our participants (23.28%) did not identify as *British White*, and this population of non-British whites were regarded as ethnic minorities. This population of ethnic minorities consisted of eight identifying as "*Other White*" in addition to one identifying as "*Irish White*", which left us with 18 participants identifying as non-white. Given our small sample and broad inclusion criteria for ethnic minorities, we believe that our results might not reflect the general tendency for ethnic minority status on subjective career success. The vast majority of studies of workplace discrimination and glass ceiling effect are conducted in the United States where they investigated racial differences between Caucasians and African-Americans (Cook & Glass, 2014; Maume, 1999; Phelps & Constantine, 2000). Furthermore, prejudice towards African and Middle-Eastern decent is widely different for non-British white people that have Western-European or American decent in the workplace (Bartkoski et al., 2018; Parkins et al., 2006). Therefore, we argue that our ethnic minority population is not generalizable enough to draw any conclusion regarding ethnic minority status' effect on subjective career success. Future studies should perhaps consider limiting the label to non-Western/non-Caucasian when studying glass ceiling effects.

Ethnic minority status and mentorship quality

We found that ethnic minority status significantly predicted higher levels of mentorship quality compared to the levels of mentorship quality reported by ethnic majority members. We found this finding a bit puzzling since it goes in the opposite direction of what previous literature suggests (Ivey & Dupré, 2022; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Palmer & Johnson-Bailey, 2008), as well as the opposite direction of our hypothesis. Ragins and colleagues (2017) highlighted that mentors can display anchoring behaviors that can soothe and comfort protégés in the face of adversity. In their studies of anchoring behaviors, which

they define as being cared for in stressful situations, they found that high quality mentors mediated the negative effects of ambient racial discrimination in the workplace (Ragins et al., 2017). Perhaps this anchoring, in the face of racial adversity for mentors with protégés with ethnic minority status, could explain why participants with ethnic minority status in our study tended to rate their mentors higher compared to those of ethnic majority. Furthermore, when we controlled for mentored participants, ethnic minority status did *not* significantly predict higher levels of mentorship quality. However, the robustness check was marginally significant in the same direction as our initial analysis. Therefore there seems to be evidence for ethnic minorities being associated with higher mentorship quality, but it is also important to keep in mind that ethnic minority status in our study was given to all participants that did not identify as British-White.

Ethnic minority status and networking behavior

We found no indication of ethnic minority status predicting networking behavior. Previous research has shown that people take demographic variables into account when forming networks (McGuire, 2000; Sparrowe et al., 2001). Since the most influential people within organizations have traditionally been Caucasian men, it has been argued that ethnic minorities have been left out of the most influential networks in the past (Fadil et al., 2009). Although the literature suggests that the networks available to ethnic minorities might be more limited compared to the ethnic majority, perhaps this does not result in less networking behavior. Our questionnaire assesses the frequency of one's engagement in networking behavior, and does not assess the quality of one's networks. Thomas highlighted that many ethnic minorities do engage in networking behavior (2001). However, he emphasizes that the key difference between those that were promoted to executives and those that plateaued in managerial roles were the diversity of their networks where executives with ethnic minority status had more diverse networks (Thomas, 2001). The differences in *who* one engages in

networking behavior with is not necessarily captured in the levels of *how much* one engages in networking behavior. Thus, perhaps there are no significant differences between ethnic minorities and those of the ethnic majority in regards to engaging in networking behavior, but rather in the quality of their networks.

Mentorship quality and subjective career success

In our analyses, we saw that mentorship quality predicted subjective career success where higher levels of mentorship quality predicted higher levels of subjective career success. This finding is in line with previous studies that indicate that mentorship is associated with increases in career satisfaction, advancements, and pay (Chao et al., 1992; Scandura, 1992; St-Jean & Mathieu, 2015). Although we see a relation between mentorship quality and subjective career success, the impact of a mentor on career success has been questioned due to the effects traditionally being weak to modest (Allen et al., 2004; L. T. Eby et al., 2008). Furthermore, the effects of mentoring have been shown to remain weak to modest when controlled against variables such as tenure, education, and networks (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008). Green and Bauer (1995) argued that the case might be that mentors take on high performing employees as protégés. Therefore, the case might be that career success perhaps predicts whether someone chosen as a protégé or not. Thus, even though there is a relationship between mentorship quality and subjective career success, the causal relationship between the two should be studied closer in future studies.

Networking behavior and subjective career success

Even though we hypothesized that networking behavior would be associated with subjective career success, we saw that networking behavior did not significantly predict subjective career success. Although we saw a trend in our hypothesized direction, it was not significant. Previous studies suggest that networking lead to more career success in terms of earnings and promotions (Langford, 2000; Michael & Yukl, 1993; Wolff & Moser, 2009).

Again, although we assess networking behavior, we did not enquire information regarding the quality of our participants' networks. Fadil and colleagues (2009) emphasized that the quality of the networks where members have influence and valuable information is an essential part of network utilization. People that benefit from networking behavior might therefore be linked to influential individuals that can connect them to desired outcomes.

In line with this reasoning, we found that networking behavior significantly predicted subjective career success in mentored participants where higher levels of networking behavior significantly predicted higher levels of subjective career success. The literature suggests that an essential part of mentorship is giving protégés the opportunity for challenging tasks and introducing them to influential individuals within the organization (Kram, 1983; O'Neill, 2005; Shen & Kram, 2011). Therefore, we argue that having a mentor that can connect you to influential individuals enhances the quality of one's networks. Thus, higher levels of networking behavior in high quality networks may lead to higher levels of subjective career success.

Theoretical and practical implications

Although we failed to find evidence for any glass ceiling effects for ethnic minorities, we showcased that mentorship seems to be implicated in positively predicting subjective career success. The limited access to mentors has been documented in previous studies (Hurst & Eby, 2012; Laiho & Brandt, 2012). Our study highlights that mentorship, and mentorship quality, seems to be an important part of career development and thus subjective career success. We therefore believe that organizations should encourage and facilitate the development of mentoring relationships in order to ensure the career development of their employees. Based on our analysis for mentored participants, networking behavior also positively predicted subjective career success. We therefore argue that mentors perhaps introduce their protégés to influential individuals, which again strengthens the quality of their

networks. Organizations should therefore also make room for networking where there are no limitations for who can partake in highly influential networks.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has numerous limitations. Firstly, it is fair to assume that our study is at risk of common method bias. Common method bias is a phenomenon that can occur when using the same method to measure different constructs (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In our study, we used Likert scales to access mentorship quality, networking behavior, and subjective career success. Using our study as an example, Podsakoff and colleagues (2003) would argue that correlations found between mentorship quality and subjective career success may not be due to a correlation between the constructs, but rather a systematic correlation due to similar measurements (the Likert scale). Keeping the common method bias in mind, we measured mentorship quality and networking behavior in T2, and subjective career success in T3 in order to minimize the effect of common method bias. However, this does not eliminate it entirely.

Secondly, we use questionnaires that are sensitive to response bias in terms of social desirability where participants might chose responses that they believe are more socially desirable/acceptable rather than less desirable answers (Grimm, 2010). Thirdly, the questionnaires also uses Likert scales for responding, which can be problematic in regression analyses . In our analyses, we treat the Likert scales on the interval level, which assumes that the distance between “never/very seldom” and “sometimes” is the same distance as between “sometimes” and “frequently”. With the Likert scales being on the nominal level due to their subjective and relative ratings, it can be problematic to treat the responses of the Likert scales on an interval level.

In our study, we wanted to test whether there is a glass ceiling effect for ethnic minorities and whether mentorship and networking could break this glass ceiling. We had

participants answer Shockley and colleagues' (2016) subjective career success questionnaire once in order to assess a glass ceiling effect. Based on Cotter and colleague's (2001) four criteria to infer a glass ceiling effect instead of general workplace discrimination, a one-time measurement for assessing a glass ceiling effect is problematic because it does not showcase how the glass ceiling effect increases over the course of a career. A longitudinal study that measures career outcomes over the course a career would be a better fit for inferring a glass ceiling phenomenon. Longitudinal studies would also give some insight to causes, and perhaps a better understanding of *how* mentorship and networking can affect glass ceiling effects.

Future research should ideally take a longitudinal approach for addressing Cotter and colleagues' (2001) four criteria for a glass ceiling effect. Although we might not have been able to infer glass ceiling effects in our study, we showcase that higher levels of mentorship quality do predict higher levels of subjective career success. Thus, we believe future research should take a look at mentorship as a tool for breaking the glass ceiling. Future research should also inquire data regarding the quality of one's networks since we believe that the quality of one's network could be essential for one's career success.

Conclusion

Opposite to our hypothesis, we found that ethnic minority status predicted higher levels of mentorship quality. However, ethnic minority status did not predict networking behavior nor subjective career success. Higher levels of mentorship quality predicted higher levels of subjective career success. We saw a trend for higher levels of networking behavior predicting subjective career success. Furthermore, networking behavior significantly predicted higher levels of subjective career success for mentored participants, which we argue is due to higher levels of network quality that is associated with protégés.

Although our three-wave study does not allow us to infer any assumption regarding the glass ceiling, we believe that this study can provoke interest in the glass ceiling of ethnic minorities, as well as highlighting that mentorship and networking have potential to be utilized as tools to combat the glass ceiling. Future studies regarding the glass ceiling should look to implement a longitudinal approach in order to study how careers progress in the light of the glass ceiling, as well as looking at mentorship and networking in a causal manner.

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