

19 - 21 December 2025

Berlin, Germany

Aspirational Selves and Career Outcomes: Unpacking the Role of Professional Self-Concept in the Public Sector

Kazimov Parviz Kazim oglu

PhD Candidate, Baku State University

Abstract

Possible self-representations play a crucial role in guiding long-term career planning and fostering proactive career behaviors. This study investigates how dimensions of Professional Self-Concept – specifically professional identity and self-efficacy – relate to individuals' Ideal Professional Self (IPS) and Future Professional Self (FPS), and how these constructs influence career success and satisfaction. The research is based on data from 188 public servants in Azerbaijan. Regression and correlational analyses show that Professional Engagement is the strongest predictor of both IPS and FPS, followed by Self-Esteem and Overt Narcissism. The FPS demonstrates stronger associations with both subjective and objective career success indicators – particularly work-life balance, career development, and promotions – than the IPS. Although environmental factors like organizational support and feedback show limited predictive power, narcissistic traits moderate key relationships. Notably, higher narcissism strengthens internal coherence between IPS and FPS but weakens links between current self-beliefs and aspirational selves. The paper concludes with practical implications for individual development and HR practice.

Keywords: future professional self; ideal professional self; professional identity; general self-efficacy; career satisfaction