

Job and career satisfaction in an austerity environment:  
The role of job security and passion towards work

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the role of passion in forming job and career satisfaction among employees in the sport industry using the dualistic model of passion developed by Vallerand et al. (2003). The research was conducted within a context of austerity measures and aimed to examine the mediating effects of job security in the relationship between passion and satisfaction at work. Employees within Greek municipal sport organisations completed a self-administered questionnaire (N=170) in order to measure their level of passion towards their work (both harmonious and obsessive), their job and career satisfaction, and their perceptions of job security. Data were treated with Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and multiple regression analyses using SPSS and Amos 21.0. The findings reveal that harmonious passion is significantly positively related to both job and career satisfaction, and that job security mediates these relationships. The research demonstrates the benefits of having harmoniously passionate employees, as well as the importance of strengthening or retaining feelings of job security under drastic socio-economic measures.

**Keywords:** passion at work, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, job security, municipal sport organisations

## 1. Introduction

There seems to be a paradox with organisations – and the workforce therein – operating in the sport ecosystem, including those in the commercial (Misener and Doherty, 2014), non-profit (Taylor and McGraw, 2006), and public (Sam, 2009) sectors. On one hand, their role becomes increasingly important (Byers, 2016) as the industry continues to grow and thrive (Foster *et al.*, 2016). On the other hand, these organisations are faced with budget cuts, time constraints and increased pressure to perform at an optimum level with limited resources (Kerwin, 2016), or forced to follow a set of values and beliefs consistent with less professional practices (Papadimitriou, 1998). The latter is perhaps even more evident in countries that have been hit by the recent economic crisis (Giannoulakis *et al.*, 2017). Consequently, various institutions (such as governments, professional bodies and federations) have been forced to adopt austerity measures and/or cut jobs in order to help their heavily indebted economies (Parnell *et al.*, 2014).

Drawing on the positive organisational scholarship (POS; Cameron *et al.*, 2003), one may find a possible explanation to the paradoxical state of affairs described above. POS focuses on identifying and developing positive organisational characteristics that lead to exceptional individual and organisational performance (Linley *et al.*, 2013). In particular, it identifies ways in which organisations and their members flourish and prosper by developing meaningful relationships and behaviours at work (Girginov *et al.*, 2006), by developing strengths such as resilience and vitality (Mroz and Quinn, 2013), or demonstrating positive emotions such as joy, interest, appreciation (Sekerka *et al.*, 2013), or passion (Perttula and Cardon, 2011). The passion that certain key actors (such as consumers/fans, participants, athletes) show towards sport has been suggested as one of the principal reasons why the industry continues to grow by showcasing unique characteristics in various areas (Babiak and Wolfe, 2009; Smith and Stewart, 2010; Wakefield, 2016).

However, the scholarly sport management community knows little about the concept of passion, since studies in this area have been empirically limited to football fans (Vallerand *et al.*, 2008a), referees (Philippe *et al.*, 2009), and professional athletes (Donahue *et al.*, 2009; Vallerand *et al.*, 2006), thereby neglecting the sport organisations' administrative personnel; that is, the potential backbone of the constant growth seen in the sport ecosystem across the globe. This is rather surprising considering that – albeit outside the sporting context – scholars and practitioners have emphasised not only the personal benefits of being passionate about one's job (Boyatzis *et al.*, 2002; Perrewé *et al.*, 2014), but also the organisational gains that can be derived from organisations having passionate employees (Bruch and Ghoshal, 2003; Ho *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, Todd and Kent (2009) suggested that the attractiveness of the sport industry workplace rests on the assumption that sport employees “derive certain emotionally significant benefits from their ‘group membership’ in sport organisations in excess of what may be seen in other industries” (p. 174).

The positive emotion that forms the central focus of the present study is passion, which is generally defined as a strong inclination towards an activity that people like and find important, and in which they invest time and energy (Vallerand *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, the present study has two points of departure. The first is that work constitutes an important activity that requires both time and energy (Birkeland and Buch, 2015; Houliort and Vallerand, 2006), and the second is that personnel in sport industry enjoy the work they do (Swanson and Kent, 2016; Swanson and Kent, 2015; Todd and Kent, 2009). However, the construct of passion has been conceptualised as a psychological state that demonstrates both adaptive and maladaptive situations through harmonious and obsessive emotional forms (Vallerand, 2015). To this end, the present exploratory study has three main purposes. The first is to examine the breath of passion (harmonious and obsessive) in a sample of employees working in the sport industry. Second, we examine the role of harmonious and obsessive

passion in forming employees' job satisfaction and career satisfaction in a specific sporting organisational context. Third, we test the extent to which job security operates as a mediator in the above relationships between passion and work variables. In doing so, this study makes four main contributions to the sport management literature. First, we investigate and confirm the application of the dualistic model of passion within the sport environment context, particularly a new organisational setting of municipal sport organisations (that is, public sector organisations). Second, we investigate the role of passion as a psychological construct driving job and career satisfaction within municipal sport organisations. Third, we provide empirical evidence of the importance of passion and the mediator role of job security for job and career satisfaction. Fourth, the research was undertaken within a context of drastic economic measures (that is, the Greek context), and therefore provides insights into the levels of passion, job security and job satisfaction perceived by employees working in public sector organisations in a country that has been forced to adopt austerity measures.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section offers a brief account of studies that have examined work-related constructs in a sport setting. Then, drawing on self-determination theory (SDT) that explains the two types of passion, we present the theoretical model and the hypotheses to be tested. We then provide the research design employed to test these hypotheses, before discussing the results. We conclude by positioning these results within the extant literature and highlighting the theoretical and practical implications thereof, before offering suggestions for further research.

## **2. Literature review**

Over the last 30 years or so, the sport management literature has shed light on psychologically related constructs within the workplace context such as commitment (e.g., Turner and Chelladurai, 2005), satisfaction (e.g., Hall *et al.*, 2010; Parks and Para, 1994), burnout (e.g., Danylchuk, 1993), and/or motivation (e.g., Cleave, 1993). Indeed, we now

have some preliminary empirical insights to suggest that administrative personnel in team sport organisations identify themselves not only with the team, but also with the organisation itself (Swanson and Kent, 2014); that employees in various sectors, with a sport management educational background, may have approximately equal prospects of attaining job satisfaction as those with the same educational background who work in the sport industry (Parks and Para, 1994); that charismatic leadership influences organisational commitment (Kent and Chelladurai, 2001); and that jobseekers are largely attracted to working in sport because they perceive a good fit between their preferences for future work and the sport environment (Todd and Andrew, 2008).

Apart from some notable exemptions (Chang and Chelladurai, 2003; Cunningham *et al.*, 2005; Koehler, 1988), the abovementioned workplace-related constructs have been largely examined in the context of intercollegiate athletic departments and/or coaching personnel in the United States, which neglects the different functions and job roles evidenced in European sport organisations in general and, in particular, outside the context of professional North American teams. More importantly, Vallerand (2010) argued that these constructs fail to offer a nuanced perspective on processes that lead to both adaptive outcomes (such as job and career satisfaction) and maladaptive (such as job insecurity) outcomes that are inherent in how the construct of passion has been conceptualised.

Even when the concept of passion emerges as one of the key internal factors regarding, for example, the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes (e.g., Babiak and Wolfe, 2009), this finding comes more from the sport consumer's perspective, and therefore relates to the wider external environmental factors of the sport industry itself (Smith and Stewart, 2010). Three notable exceptions exist in the current literature. The first study reports the concept of passion as an intrinsic stimulus for the formulation of community programmes (Anagnostopoulos *et al.*, 2014), albeit without

measuring the extent to which managers therein are passionate about their jobs. The second study (Anagnostopoulos *et al.*, 2016) addresses the aforementioned shortcoming, although without making it possible to establish any sort of causality between passion at work and other job-related constructs. It is only recently that Swanson and Kent (2016) studied just that by examining the influence of passion (as well as pride) on employees of professional sport organisations. Their study notably reported that obsessive passion in particular seems to work in a distinctly positive fashion within professional sport workplaces, as compared to its negative influence on employees within other non-sport industries.

The present paper builds on the abovementioned three recent studies on sport employees' passion by hypothesising on the links among passion, job and career satisfaction, and job security (Figure 1).

### **3. Theoretical framework and hypotheses**

Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan and Deci, 2000) posits that the degree of self-determination underlying behaviour results from how it has been internalised into an individual's self-concept (Caudroit *et al.*, 2011). The present study draws on the dualistic model of passion (DMP), which is based on SDT, and suggests that passion can be categorised into two theoretically distinct types depending on whether an activity is internalised into an individual's self-concept in an autonomous or a controlled way (Vallerand *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, the process of 'internalisation' and the notion of 'control' are at the centre of DMP. Internalisation refers to a person's ability to transform externally regulated structures (values, attitudes, and beliefs) into internally regulated ones (Gagné and Deci, 2005). Control refers to whether the person is in control (that is, autonomous) of the activity, which has been internalised and defines 'who this person is' (in the present case, 'work'); or to whether the person is controlled by the activity itself, something that prevents him/her from freely deciding the extent of his or her engagement (Vallerand *et al.*, 2003).

### *3.1 Harmonious and obsessive passion*

On these theoretical grounds, harmonious passion involves autonomous internalisation in which the individual freely pursues the job because of the job's importance or characteristics rather than because of any derived feelings of social approval or recognition (Ho *et al.*, 2011; Vallerand and Houlfort, 2003). In contrast, obsessive passion captures a pressured internalisation of the job, meaning that employees perceive their jobs as important because of certain pressures or outcomes attached to the job (Vallerand and Houlfort, 2003). To this end, whereas harmonious passionate employees engage in job-related tasks in a more flexible manner, obsessive passionate employees are likely to experience conflicts and other negative affective, cognitive and behavioural consequences during and after activity engaging with job-related activities (Vallerand *et al.*, 2003).

### *3.2 Job satisfaction and career satisfaction as outcomes of passion*

The central premise of SDT is that a person's psychological growth comes from satisfying three basic needs: relatedness, competence and autonomy (Deci and Ryan, 1994). In other words, what motivates a person to continue practising an activity (in this case, work) is the person's engagement in an activity that (a) they feel they are good at (competence), (b) allows them to develop personal initiatives (autonomy), and (c) connects them to others within a social environment (relatedness). Given that the conceptualisation of passion has been derived from SDT – and its central premise – it is expected that employee's passion will have an influence on job satisfaction, which has been defined as the degree to which employees are generally happy with their work (Hackman and Oldham, 1975),

Mainly within the context of intercollegiate coaches, job satisfaction has been the subject of examination within the sport management context in relation to turnover, performance or leadership (e.g., Chelladurai and Ogasawara, 2003; Dixon and Warner, 2010; Li, 1993; Snyder, 1990). However, only three notable studies (none of them from the sport



working context) have examined the relationship between passion and job satisfaction, with results largely showing that harmonious passion may be positive for job satisfaction and obsessive passion negative (Carbonneau *et al.*, 2008; Thorgren *et al.*, 2013; Vallerand *et al.*, 2010). Thus, in line with previous studies on passion at work, we hypothesize – for the first time in the sport management literature – that the two types of passion would predict job satisfaction, but in opposite directions:

*Hypothesis 1a: Harmonious passion experienced by administrative personnel in sport organisations is positively related to job satisfaction.*

*Hypothesis 2a: Obsessive passion experienced by administrative personnel in sport organisations is negatively related to job satisfaction.*

Although a few studies have established that the two types of passion have important implications for job satisfaction, empirical works have so far failed to extend these implications to career satisfaction. Career satisfaction, defined as the degree to which one is satisfied with the progress of his/her career (Boies and Rothstein, 2002), is a particularly important construct for the sport management scholarly community if one considers the proliferation of educational programmes designed to prepare the future professional administrative workforce in sport (Emery *et al.*, 2012). Surprisingly, it is only the *intended* (emphasis on the original) career satisfaction that has been examined in sport management literature (see Cunningham *et al.*, 2005). A recent study, which, however, did not look at career satisfaction per se, documented that sport management alumni report unsatisfied –by and large– due to limited career options (Schwab *et al.*, 2015). Outside sport, career satisfaction has been studied, for example, in relation to employees' willingness to relocate and turnover intentions (e.g., Aryee *et al.*, 1996; Boies and Rothstein, 2002; Noe and Barber,

1993), but not in relation to the two types of passion. Against this background, and for the first time in passion-related literature, we propose the following:

*H1b: Harmonious passion experienced by administrative personnel in sport organisations is positively related to career satisfaction.*

*H2b: Obsessive passion experienced by administrative personnel in sport organisations is negatively related to career satisfaction.*

### 3.3 Job security as a mediator amongst both types of passion and job and career satisfaction

The job-related literature points out that job security is the construct with the largest and most significant effect on satisfaction (job and career) in the workplace (Nikolaou *et al.*, 2005). Job security is defined as “one’s expectations about continuity in a job situation” (Davy *et al.*, 1997, p. 323), including concern over “loss of desirable job features such as lack of promotion opportunities, current working conditions, and long-term career opportunities” (ibid.). Various studies have emphasised the detrimental effect of job insecurity on job satisfaction, personal well-being, organisational commitment, and by extension, on organisational efficiency and overall organisational performance (e.g., Ashford *et al.*, 1989; Blanchflower and Oswald, 1999; Davy *et al.*, 1997; Kaiser, 2002; Souza-Poza and Souza Poza, 2000). Although the extant literature on the bivariate relationship between job security and its outcomes has uncovered significant correlations, it has not investigated the construct’s mediating explanatory power for employees’ passion and their overall satisfaction.

Echoing Vallerand’s (2010) call for more research that would explore the psychological processes, which, in turn, explain how passion contributes to work outcomes, we introduce job security as a new candidate for mediation. Arguably, this exploration posits an effect between passion and job security. This path can be theoretically grounded in the positive organizational literature and the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001)

given that passion reflects the experience of positive (harmonious) or negative (obsessive) emotions during activity engagement (Vallerand, 2010). To date, research has shown that positive emotions broaden people's thought-action repertoires (Fredrickson, 2004) thereby leading those individuals to be more flexible (Isen and Daubman, 1984), open to information and creative (Isen *et al.*, 1987) as well as, and perhaps most importantly, equipped with more enduring resources and strategies to cope with adversity (Fredrickson and Joiner, 2002). Also, researchers have drawn attention to the emotion reactions of job insecurity which constrains the ability of the employees to cope with the potential threat of a job loss (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). Extrapolating from these findings, and given that a threat to job security represents the most significant barrier to job satisfaction, we argue that perceived job insecurity might work as a mechanism or mediating variable to better understand how passionate employees (harmonious or obsessive) become more or less satisfied with their job and career in a sport organisational environment. Put simply, while passion towards job directly affects satisfaction with this particular job and career, fuelling employees with psychological resilience (Fredrickson, 2001) may also reduce the subjective value attached to job insecurity, which enables them to cope better with the job loss associated emotions, particularly in times of economic crisis.

Based on the above assumptions, the lack of exploration of the mediating role of job security in the passion-satisfaction relationship is considered an important omission in the extant literature, because it limits our ability to understand the explanatory power passion has in the workplace (Houliort and Vallerand, 2006), and for that matter, in the sport working environment (Anagnostopoulos *et al.*, 2016). Addressing this omission also becomes timely when one considers that the sport organisations' workforce has not been immune from the negative ramifications of the economic crisis that hit certain European countries particularly hard. Indeed, a recent study that looked at the consequences of austerity measures in the

Greek sport federations (perhaps the prime European example of a country undergoing difficult times for almost a decade because of the economic crisis) highlighted a number of operational cost savings (including organisational restructuring, administrative costs, cancelation of sporting events, etc.), which have had implications on employment in the industry (Giannoulakis *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, job security (or rather, insecurity) may have explanatory power on both job satisfaction and career satisfaction, irrespective of the degree of passion – and for that matter, the type of passion – that administrative employees demonstrate for their job. Against this background, we offer the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3: Job security will mediate the relationships between the two types of passion, job satisfaction and career satisfaction for administrative personnel in sport organisations.*

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model and hypothesised relationships of the present study.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

## **4. Method**

### *4.1 Sampling and Procedure*

This study was conducted in Greece, and particularly in the context of municipal sport organisations. These are non-profit enterprises that are under the control of the municipal governments and manage city parks, sport facilities for public or non-profit club use and offer recreational activities in their area of responsibility. Municipal sport organisations are led by a board of directors assigned by the city council. Besides activity-based income, the particular organisations are financed by the municipal budgets to employ full-time staff to run their sport development programmes to a broad range of age groups on an annual basis. They are also involved in staging sport events and managing the municipal sport facilities. The rationale for selecting the particular type of organisations and employees was to ensure a homogeneous sample of sport-related employees with similar tasks and responsibilities

(compared to, for example, professional sport clubs or sport national federations) and avoid increased variance in the employment-related variables (e.g., job security, promotion, empowerment etc.). Furthermore, given that one of the aims of the current study was to explore the mediating role of perceived job security, Greece made for an appropriate research setting considering that, as from 2010, employees have been extensively exposed in job layoffs and tremendous work-related benefit cuts.

The sampled municipal sport organisations (n=23) were located in the region of Attica, Greece, a heavily populated region with 3.8 million citizens and 31 different municipalities. The process of data collection took place between November and December of 2015 and was led by a trained researcher. The researcher approached the respondents at their work and asked employees for their consent to answer the survey regarding job-related dimensions. A total of 170 respondents completed the self-administered questionnaire by offering usable entries for data analysis. The majority of the respondents were female (62.4 per cent), 41 years or older (64.0 per cent), and held at least a university degree (70.5 per cent). Most respondents (71.2 per cent) held a tenure position in the particular organisations, and had been with their organisation for more than 10 years. Table 1 provides the demographic characteristics of the sample.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

#### *4.2 Measures*

Passion was measured in this study using the instrument that Vallerand *et al.* (2003) developed to gauge the passion individuals experience in different contexts. The particular instrument consists of two components (known as the dualistic model): one that distinguishes between passionate and non-passionate employees, and one that distinguishes between harmonious or obsessive passion among employees. This instrument is well received in the literature, which reports close to 100 studies measuring passion based these on these two scales (Curran *et al.*, 2015).

Following the instructions by Vallerand *et al.* (2003), we asked the respondents first to report their level of agreement with the following statement: “*This work is a passion for me*”. Respondents reported their values on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Based on this criterion, employees were considered passionate towards their work only if their score was above the midpoint (3.5) on this scale (see Vallerand and Houliort, 2003). This led to 22 respondents being excluded from the final sample.

The main part of the instrument consisted of two subscales based on Vallerand *et al.* (2003), assessing harmonious and obsessive passion, also using a seven-point Likert scale. Six items were used to measure harmonious passion, including “*This work is a passion that I manage to control*”, and “*My work is well integrated in my life*”. Obsessive passion was measured with six items, including “*This work is the only thing that really excites me*”, “*I am emotionally dependent on this work*”, and “*This work is so exciting that I sometimes lose control over it*”.

Job satisfaction was measured with two items borrowed from Thorgren *et al.* (2013), and Egan *et al.* (2004). The items were modified slightly to fit the research context. An example is “*I am extremely satisfied with my job situation*”. Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from very satisfied (7) to very dissatisfied (1). Coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ) for job security was good at .82.

Career satisfaction was measured with five items following Greenhaus *et al.* (1990). Examples include “*I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career*”, and “*I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals for the development of new skills*”. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for this measure was .83, which is considered good. Responses were obtained on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from very satisfied (7) to very dissatisfied (1).

Job security was measured with four items based on Caplan *et al.* (1975) and Davy *et al.* (1997), including “*How certain are you about job security in this company?*” and “*How certain are you about what your responsibilities will be six months from now?*” The response format for job security was a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely uncertain) to 7 (extremely certain). Coefficient  $\alpha$  for job security at .88 was good.

Apart from the above variables, the survey included also demographic variables (age, gender, education, and income), and basic work-related variables such as employment position and job tenure. Details of the scale-related measures are included in Table 2.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

#### 4.3 Establishing psychometric properties and validity

We conducted two analyses to assess the measurement model. First, a confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the psychometric properties and factorial validity of the dualistic model of passion using SPSS and AMOS 21. The respective results showed a very good fit to the data:  $\chi^2=58.56$ ;  $df=49$ ;  $Cmin/df=1.19$  GFI=.94, CFI=.98, SRMR=.05, RMSEA=.06 (Hu and Bentler, 1998). In addition, the Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for each of two scales ( $\alpha=.77$  for harmonious;  $\alpha=.81$  for obsessive) was within the recommended standards of .70 or higher (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), confirming the reliability of the measurement. The single-factor model was also tested as an alternative, with CFA, and the results were not satisfactory:  $\chi^2=192.2$ ;  $df=52$ ;  $Cmin/df=3.69$  GFI=.79, CFI=.71, SRMR=.11, RMSEA=.13; this provides additional evidence that passion is received as a two dimensional construct in a sport organisational context.

Second, the measurement model with all four constructs (passion, job security, job satisfaction and career satisfaction) was tested with CFA to demonstrate that it fits the data of this study reasonably well, and to explore the psychometric properties of convergent and discriminant validity. The overall fit of the global hypothesised model was according to the

recommended standards:  $\chi^2=337.39$ ;  $df=213$ ;  $Cmin/df=1.58$  CFI=.92, SRMR=.06, RMSEA=.06 (Hu and Bentler, 1998). The composite reliability (CR) measures for all constructs exceeded the minimum value of .70, indicating that the constructs have high reliability (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The values for the average variance extracted (AVE), the commonly applied criterion for convergent validity, ranged from .40 to .69. This demonstrates sufficient convergent validity for the constructs of job satisfaction (.69), career satisfaction (.51) and job security (.64) (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) with the exception of the constructs of harmonious (.41) and obsessive (.40) passion, for which AVE was slightly below the cut-off value. Given the good performance of the particular construct in the remaining psychometric properties, we decide to retain it in the model. Discriminant validity was tested following the procedure recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981), which asks that the AVE for each construct be higher than the squared correlations between the construct and the any other construct in the model. The relevant results indicate that all squared inter-construct correlations were lower than either of the construct's AVEs. Table 2 presents the content of the items per construct, the factor loadings per item, and the values for each of the psychometric properties (that is, Cronbach's alpha, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR)).

[Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here]

#### *4.4 Results – Hypothesis testing*

The correlation coefficients showed that harmonious and obsessive passion are positively related to job satisfaction ( $r=.59$  for harmonious and  $r=.16$  for obsessive), career satisfaction ( $r=.55$  for harmonious and  $r=.17$  for obsessive), and job security ( $r=.34$  for harmonious and  $r=.17$  for obsessive); see Table 3. Job satisfaction is positively correlated to career satisfaction ( $r=.62$ ) and to job security ( $r=.40$ ). The particular correlations are moderate and do not exceed the maximum value of .70, which is one indicator for the absence of



multicollinearity for the study variables (Cohen and Cohen, 1983). Typical assumptions about multicollinearity statistics (variance inflation factor (VIF) below 10 and tolerance values more than .10) were also checked and found to be according to the recommended standards (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Aggregate measures of passion, job security, job satisfaction and career satisfaction were employed to test the hypotheses.

We employed hierarchical regression analysis to test Hypotheses 1 and 2; the results are reported in Table 4. For Hypotheses H1a and H2a, job satisfaction was the dependent variable. In Step 1, gender, education and job tenure were entered in the first regression model, followed by harmonious passion in Step 2. The dependent variable for Hypotheses H2a and H2b was career satisfaction; gender, education and job tenure were entered in Step 1, followed by harmonious passion in Step 2, and obsessive passion in Step 3.

Harmonious passion accounted for 33 per cent ( $\Delta R^2 = .33$ ,  $p < .001$ ) of the variance in job satisfaction and explained 29 per cent ( $\Delta R^2 = .29$ ,  $p < .001$ ) of the variance in career satisfaction, above and beyond the control variables of gender, education and tenure. Furthermore, harmonious passion had a significant impact ( $\beta = .59$ ,  $p < .001$ ) on job satisfaction and a significantly positive correlation ( $\beta = .55$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with career satisfaction (see Table 4). This provided evidence to support H1a and H1b.

The results with regard to H2a and H2b showed that obsessive passion failed to offer a unique and statistically significant contribution in explaining the variance of both job satisfaction ( $\Delta R^2 = .00$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and career satisfaction ( $\Delta R^2 = .00$ ,  $p > .05$ ), above and beyond the control variables and harmonious passion together. Also, obsessive passion had no significant impact on job satisfaction ( $\beta = -.06$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and career satisfaction ( $\beta = .01$ ,  $p > .05$ ). These results do not provide any evidence to support H2a or H2b.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

#### *4.5 The mediating role of job security*

In order to test H3, we used Baron and Kenny's (1986) four-step procedure for testing the mediating effects of job security on the relationships between harmonious and obsessive passion and job satisfaction and career satisfaction. This approach involves three distinctive regression equations and sets of coefficients to be estimated, and testing the significance of the mediation. According to Baron and Kenny (1986, p. 1177), these are: (1) "regressing the mediator on the independent variable"; (2) "regressing the dependent variable on the independent variable"; (3) "regressing the dependent variable on both the independent variable and on the mediator"; and (4) testing the significance of the "indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable via the mediator". According to this procedure, initially, two sets of mediational models were run: one to explore the mediating role of job security in the harmonious passion–job satisfaction relationship, and one to explore the effect of job security on the harmonious passion–career satisfaction relationship. The same two sets of mediational models were applied to the obsessive passion–job satisfaction and obsessive passion–career satisfaction relationships. Finally, the significance of the mediator in relation to the independent and dependent variables (step four) is tested by the Sobel test (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Sobel, 1982). These results are presented in Tables 5 and 6, respectively, and synthesized in Figure 2.

The results from the four-step procedure showed that job security partially mediates the relationships between harmonious passion and job satisfaction and between harmonious passion and career satisfaction, leading to acceptance of H3. More specifically, Models 1 and 2 in Table 5 show that harmonious passion offers a significant contribution in forming job security ( $\beta=.34$ ;  $t=4.40$ ,  $p<.00$ ), job satisfaction ( $\beta=.60$ ;  $t=9.03$ ,  $p<.00$ ) and in forming career satisfaction ( $\beta=.55$ ;  $t=7.96$ ,  $p<.00$ ). These data provided support for the two of Baron and Kenny's (1986) four conditions for establishing mediation. The inclusion of the mediating

variable of job security in the third equation reduced the effect of harmonious passion on job satisfaction by .08 (.60–.52; Sobel test,  $t=3.13$ ,  $p<.01$ ), although it remains statistically significant (Table 5). This leads to the conclusion that job security partially mediates the relationship between harmonious passion and job satisfaction. Similarly to Model 1, the results for Model 2 revealed that job security only partially mediates the relationship between harmonious passion and career satisfaction. The beta value of harmonious passion was diminished in the third equation from .55 to .40 (Sobel test,  $t=4.19$ ,  $p<.001$ ) but remained statistically significant. This provides evidence that job security partially mediates the relationship between harmonious passion and career satisfaction.

[Insert Table 6 and Figure 2 about here]

Table 6 presents the results of the same procedure with regard to the mediating role of job security in the relationships between obsessive passion, job satisfaction and career satisfaction, models 3 and 4. As the table shows, obsessive passion positively affects job security ( $\beta=.17$ ;  $t=2.12$ ,  $p<.05$ ), job satisfaction ( $\beta=.16$ ;  $t=2.00$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and career satisfaction ( $\beta=.17$ ;  $t=2.17$ ,  $p<.05$ ), offering the required support for the Baron and Kenny's (1986) two conditions in the four-step procedure for establishing mediation. Results show that when job security was added into the equation, the association between obsessive passion and job satisfaction was reduced by .07 (.16–.09), but the reduction was not reliable (Sobel test,  $t=1.86$ ,  $p=.063$ ), thus the condition for mediation was not met for job security in the relationship between obsessive passion and job satisfaction. Furthermore, obsessive passion no longer has a significant contribution in forming job satisfaction ( $\beta=.09$ ;  $t=1.55$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Finally, the inclusion of both variables (obsessive passion and job security) in the third equation testing the obsessive–career satisfaction relationship reduced the effect of obsessive passion on career satisfaction from .17 to .08 (Sobel test,  $t=2.10$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and this effect becomes insignificant ( $\beta=.08$ ;  $t=1.17$ ,  $p>.05$ ). According to the criteria set by Baron and

Kenny (1986), the above findings provide support for a full mediation role of job security in the relationship between obsessive passion and career satisfaction.

## 5. Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to examine the effect of passion (both harmonious and obsessive) on job and career satisfaction within municipal sport organisations in a country under austerity measures, and the mediating influence of job security on the relationships between passion–job/career satisfaction. With as many as 89.4 per cent of the employees surveyed reporting passion for their job, the present study supports the importance of passion within municipal sport organisations and offers insights into a new context of European public sector sport organisations. By investigating DMP (Vallerand *et al.*, 2003), we have shown that employees within Greek municipal sport organisations possess moderate-to-high levels of harmonious passion and moderate-to-low levels of obsessive passion. Using SDT (Ryan and Deci, 2000), which is core to DMP, our findings suggest that the surveyed employees are in control of their job-related activities in a flexible and autonomous manner, and are not controlled by these activities or the pressures associated to their job, which would prevent them from freely determining the extent of their engagement into job-related activities. According to Vallerand (2010), these constructs offer a nuanced perspective on processes leading to both adaptive and maladaptive outcomes of passion such as job/career (dis)satisfaction and job (in)security.

Our findings are in line with those from other studies in a non-sport setting, which have shown that individuals may have one type of passion without the other (Ho *et al.*, 2011). However, the level of harmonious passion measured in the present study using Vallerand *et al.*'s (2003) dualistic model is lower than that in a recent study (Anagnostopoulos *et al.*, 2016) of employees within football clubs and charities in the United Kingdom. Job

satisfaction and career satisfaction show high scores, whereas job security shows a moderate score; that is, lower than what one would expect from employees in municipal sport organisations, 71.2 per cent of whom were on tenure contracts. The context in which the data was collected – Greek municipal sport organisations – has been affected by economic tensions and drastic socio-economic reforms, which could explain the low levels of job security, as public sector organisations have been forced to adopt austerity measures (Giannoulakis *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, the present study shows that harmonious passion has strong relationships with job and career satisfaction. Job satisfaction is partially explained by the employees' level of harmonious passion, and career satisfaction is partially explained by education, tenure, harmonious passion and job satisfaction itself. Employees in the municipal sport organisations who appear to undertake their works freely and voluntarily (Vallerand and Houliort, 2003) demonstrate higher satisfaction at work and in their careers. These findings confirm those of previous studies (Carbonneau *et al.*, 2008; Thorgren *et al.*, 2013; Vallerand *et al.*, 2010) showing that harmonious passion is positively related to job satisfaction.

The present study also shows that harmonious passion is positively related to career satisfaction, which previous research has failed to establish (Boies and Rothstein, 2002). These findings are associated with those of Anagnostopoulos *et al.* (2016), who showed that employees (in the context of team sport organisations) remain harmoniously passionate throughout their career; this would suggest that employees with harmonious passion would show satisfaction throughout their careers. The level of education and tenure were found to be significantly positively related to employees' career satisfaction, which contrasts with previous research findings (Seibert and Kraimer, 2001; Yap *et al.*, 2010). Level of education and tenure were not related to job satisfaction in the present research. Workplace satisfaction is seen as a narrower construct than career satisfaction, to which it contributes. Therefore, job

satisfaction might be intrinsically related to the work-life balance expressed by harmonious passion, whereas career satisfaction would also include important elements driving career success (namely, tenure and education in the present study), although previous research on the effects of these constructs is ambiguous.

Obsessive passion showed a positive significant correlational relationship with job and career satisfaction, although the strength of the relationships is weak ( $r=.16$  and  $.17$ , respectively). Even though obsessive passion could be seen as having a negative influence on job or career satisfaction due to its association with activity addiction (Stenseng, 2008) or emotional exhaustion (Lavigne *et al.*, 2012), the present results do not support the relation between obsessive passion and job or career dissatisfaction. Employees with higher obsessive passion towards their job report also higher levels of positive emotions (Swanson and Kent, 2016). Given the levels of harmonious and obsessive passion measured in the present research, it could also be argued that harmonious passion prevents negative consequences such as burnout from occurring (Carbonneau *et al.*, 2008; Vallerand *et al.*, 2010), which would affect job and career satisfaction.

Several studies (e.g., Ashford *et al.*, 1989; Blanchflower and Oswald, 1999; Davy *et al.*, 1997; Kaiser, 2002; Nikolaou *et al.*, 2005; Souza-Poza and Souza Poza, 2000) have considered job (in)security to be an important factor for personal well-being and individuals' satisfaction regarding their jobs and careers. The present research confirms the relationships between job security and job/career satisfaction within municipal sport organisations. It also shows that harmonious passion is significantly correlated to job security, whereas obsessive passion shows weak significant correlational relationship with job security. Therefore, harmoniously passionate employees would perceive their job as being secure and would expect continuity in their job situation, according to Davy *et al.*'s (1997) definition of job security. Subsequently, this perception of security would lead to a higher level of satisfaction

towards their job and career. The present study offers new insights into the relation between passion and job/career satisfaction by demonstrating the mediating role of job security in the aforementioned relation. This means passionate employees may either experience less negative emotions related to potential job threats, or they are more capable in coping with emotions associated with situations of job insecurity. This may be because employees perceive the importance of their job and thus become passionate about it. Even in the cases of tensed economic conditions, passionate employees seem capable to experience high satisfaction for both their job and their career. Therefore, the mediating role of job insecurity expands our understanding of the role that passion has in the workplace by positively increasing employees' individual feelings of security in their jobs.

The context in which the research has been undertaken is deliberate and decisive; that is, Greek municipal sport organisations under an austerity environment. Under these conditions, job security could be perceived as being uncertain and, as suggested by the abovementioned literature, could threaten an individual's satisfaction toward his or her job/career. However, the present research indicates that considering the socio-economic measures that has affected the country under investigation, and despite an average lower level of job security that one would expect from employees with tenure, employees would be able to engage in positive personal behaviour such as that demonstrated by their harmonious passion towards their job. This positive personal behaviour would reinforce the perceptions of job security, despite the austerity measures, with positive consequences over their level of satisfaction. Positive personal behaviour such as harmonious passion, which is associated with work-life balance, has the potential to turn negative aspects of the working environment – such as pressures to perform with limited resources, budget cuts and organisational restructuring in the present study's context – into positive perceptions of job security and satisfaction at the workplace.

## **6. Conclusion**

### *6.1 Theoretical implication*

The present research offers validation for the 12-item scale of the dualistic model of passion within the sport organisation setting of municipal sport organisations. It offers additional evidence that passion in sport organisational context is a two-distinct-dimension construct of harmonious and obsessive passion. It provides insight into employees' level of passion in an under-studied organisational setting; that of public sport service organisations. The importance of passion for job and career satisfaction is confirmed through the research, particularly the positive outcomes associated with harmonious passion. This is an advance in research as the present study is the first to provide empirical evidence of the importance of harmonious passion for career satisfaction, beyond other significant variables such as education, job tenure and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the research demonstrates that employees working under austerity environment express passion and satisfaction at work. Finally, it reveals that job security, as perceived by employees, can be considered a mediator variable between passion and satisfaction at work.

### *6.2 Practical implications*

In the present study, the personal benefits of having harmoniously passionate employees are evidenced in relation to positive outcomes such as job security and satisfaction. Particularly, managers of sport organisations should reinforce employees' autonomy and control over their job tasks and activities in order to promote harmonious passion and facilitate job and career satisfaction. Under austere socio-economic measures, positive organisational behaviour, such as passion towards one's job, is critical to strengthening or retaining feelings of job security and, ultimately, satisfaction at work, facilitating individual and organisational performance (Linley *et al.*, 2013). Job tenure is an important aspect of career satisfaction, as is level of education, and both aspects should be



considered by decision-makers. Managers aiming to increase employees' satisfaction towards their job and career could also consider training employees on techniques to manage their work-life balance.

### *6.3 Limitations and further research*

It was a deliberate choice to investigate the role of passion and job security on job/career satisfaction within a public sector organisational context affected by austerity measures. Even though findings are context-specific (and could be replicated in another sport organisation context affected by similar drastic socio-economic measures), we believe they resonate with sport organisations in general. However, the sample has a high percentage of employees with tenure contract. Furthermore, the survey has been self-administrated, which could have influenced the results. Further studies could investigate the extent to which passion (harmonious and obsessive) would influence job and career satisfaction placing job security as a moderating variable which systematically modifies the strength and the form of the relationship between passion and job and career satisfaction. This is because it is likely that passionate employees experience different levels of satisfaction when they are operating in high or low security working environments.

Positive outcomes of passion require further understanding, particularly in the sport setting, which is embedded with passionate individuals. The present research shows the importance of harmonious passion leading to job/career satisfaction through job security, but other outcomes of passion could be investigated in sport organisational contexts, such as organisational commitment and identification. Negative outcomes of obsessive passion would also be an interesting area for further research, as it posits that obsessively passionate employees would experience flow, burnout and workaholism but has not yet been investigated in sport management. Finally, beyond satisfaction at work, the influence of

passion and job security on individual and organisational performance would also be avenues for further research.

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**Table 1. Demographics (N=170)**

	f	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	64	37.6
Female	106	62.4
<b>Age</b>		
Under 30 years of age	7	4.1
31 to 40	52	30.6
41 to 50	87	51.2
51 and up	24	13.1
<b>Education</b>		
12 year compulsory education	24	14.1
A-Levels or Advanced Highers	26	15.3
Undergraduate degree	89	52.3
Postgraduate degree	31	18.2
<b>Individual Annual Income</b>		
Less than 10.000 euro	46	27.1
10.001 – 20.000	96	56.5
20.001 and up	28	16.5
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Tenure	121	71.2
Contract-based employment	29	17.1
Part-time	20	11.8
<b>Length of Experience</b>		
Up to one year	20	11.8
2 – 5 years	24	14.1
6 – 10 years	35	20.5
10 – and up	101	53.6

**Table 2. Path coefficients for items of the constructs in the model (N=148)**

	Factor loadings
<b>Harmonious Passion (HP) (<math>\alpha=.78</math>; CR=.78; AVE=.41)</b>	
<i>This work is a passion that I manage to control</i>	.60
<i>The new things that I discover with this work allow me to appreciate it even more</i>	.64
<i>This work reflects the qualities I like about myself</i>	.70
<i>This work allows me to live a variety of experiences</i>	.58
<i>My work is well integrated in my life</i>	.55
<i>My work is in harmony with other things that are part of me</i>	.60
<b>Obsessive Passion (OP) (<math>\alpha=.81</math>; CR=.79; AVE=.40)</b>	
<i>I have difficulties controlling my urge to do my work</i>	.48
<i>I have almost an obsessive feeling for this work</i>	.74
<i>This work is the only thing that really excites me</i>	.61
<i>If I could, I would only do my work</i>	.64
<i>This work is so exciting that I sometimes lose control over it</i>	.63
<i>I am emotionally dependent on this work</i>	.65
<b>Job Satisfaction (JS) (<math>\alpha=.82</math>; CR=.82; AVE=.69)</b>	
<i>I am extremely satisfied with my job situation</i>	.80
<i>I am extremely satisfied with my responsibilities at work</i>	.87
<b>Career Satisfaction (CS) (<math>\alpha=.83</math>; CR=.83; AVE=.51)</b>	
<i>I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career</i>	.76
<i>I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my overall career goals</i>	.75
<i>I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals for income</i>	.52
<i>I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals for advancement</i>	.84
<i>I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals for the development of new skills</i>	.63
<b>Job Security (JSC) (<math>\alpha=.88</math>; CR=.87; AVE=.64)</b>	
<i>How certain are you about what your future career picture looks like in this organization?</i>	.80
<i>How certain are you of the opportunities for promotion and advancement which will exist in the next few years?</i>	.78
<i>How certain are you about job security in this organization?</i>	.92
<i>How certain are you about what your responsibilities will be six months from now?</i>	.67
Note. *Factor loading significant at $p<.001$ .	

**Table 3. Means, standard deviations and results of the correlation test (bivariate correlations)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	1							
2. Education	-.07	1						
3. Tenure	-.14	.03	1					
4. Harmonious Passion (HP)	-.16*	.08	-.12	1				
5. Obsessive Passion (OP)	-.11	-.12	-.10	.37**	1			
6. Job Satisfaction (JS)	-.60	.08	-.13	.59**	.16*	1		
7. Career Satisfaction (CS)	-.13	.24**	.12	.55**	.17*	.62**	1	
8. Job Security (JSC)	-.15	.24**	.16*	.34**	.17*	.40**	.56**	1
Means			12.24	4.99	3.20	4.65	4.66	3.90
SD			8.24	.99	1.20	1.39	1.09	1.51

**Table 4. Results from Hierarchical Regression Analysis**

	<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	<b>Career Satisfaction</b>
<i>Step 1</i>		
Gender	-.07	-.09
Education	.08	.23**
Tenure	-.15	.09
R <sup>2</sup>	.014	.061
<i>Step 2</i>		
Gender	-.03	.001
Education	.04	.19**
Tenure	-.06	.18**
Harmonious Passion	.59***	.55***
R <sup>2</sup>	.35	.35
Δ R <sup>2</sup>	.33	.29
F for Δ R <sup>2</sup>	74.87***	67.48***
<i>Step 3</i>		
Gender	.02	.002
Education	.03	.19**
Tenure	-.06	.18**
Harmonious Passion	.61***	.55***
Obsessive Passion	-.06	.01
R <sup>2</sup>	.35	.35
Δ R <sup>2</sup>	.00	.00
F for Δ R <sup>2</sup>	.003	.03

**Legend:** DV: Dependent Variable; IV: Independent Variable;  $\beta$ : Standardized coefficient  $\beta$ ; \*\*\* $P < .001$ , \*\* $P < .01$ , \* $P < .05$ .

**Table 5. Testing the mediating effects of job security on the relationships between harmonious passion and job satisfaction, and harmonious passion and career satisfaction**

DV	IV	$\beta$	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Adj. R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>F Value</i>
Model 1					
a. Job Security	Harmonious Passion	.34***	4.40	.11	19.41***
b. Job Satisfaction	Harmonious Passion	.60***	9.03	.35	81.63***
c. Job Satisfaction	Harmonious Passion	.52***	7.63 <sup>a</sup>	.40	49.17***
	Job Security	.22***	3.32	t= 3.13**	
Model 2					
a. Job Security	Harmonious Passion	.34***	4.40	.11	19.41***
b. Career Satisfaction	Harmonious Passion	.55***	7.96	.30	63.47***
c. Career Satisfaction	Harmonious Passion	.40***	6.24 <sup>a</sup>	.46	62.95***
	Job Security	.42***	6.62	t= 4.19***	

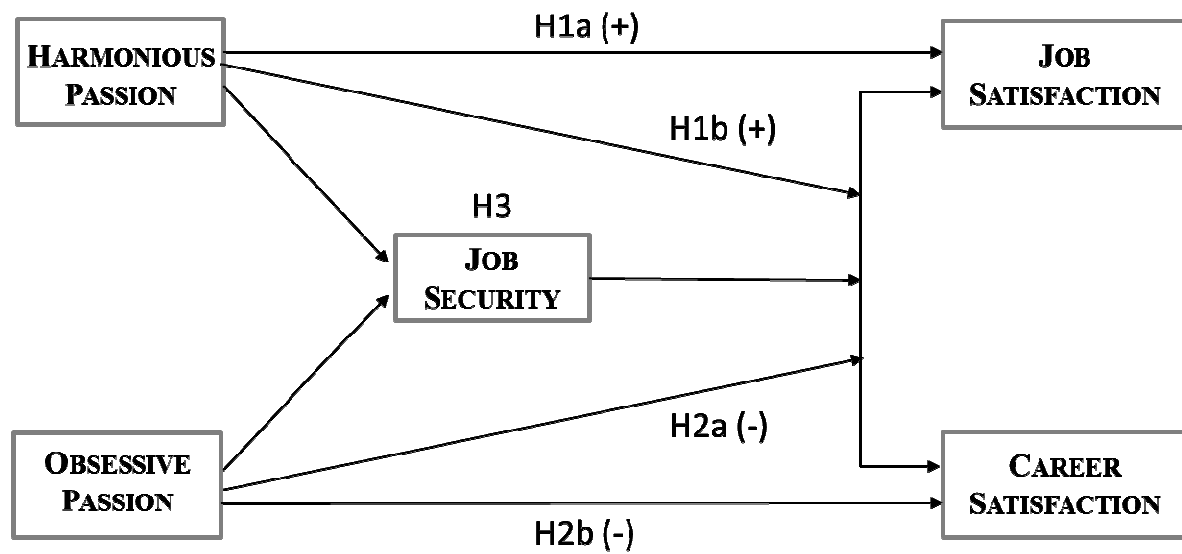
**Legend:** DV: Dependent Variable; IV: Independent Variable;  $\beta$ : Standardized coefficient  $\beta$ ; \*\*\* $P < .001$ , \*\* $P < .01$ , \* $P < .05$ ; <sup>a</sup> partial mediation; *t*: Sobel test score

**Table 6. Testing the mediating effects of job security on the relationships between obsessive passion and job satisfaction, and obsessive passion and career satisfaction**

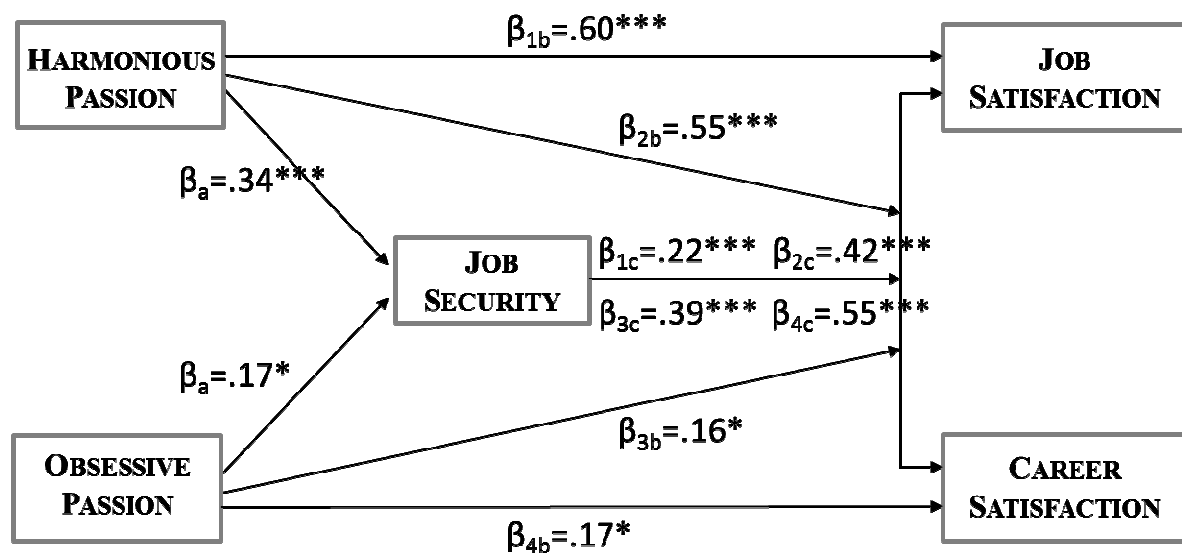
DV	IV	$\beta$	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Adj. R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>F Value</i>
Model 3					
a. Job Security	Obsessive Passion	.17*	2.12	.02	4.53*
b. Job Satisfaction	Obsessive Passion	.16*	2.00	.02	4.03*
c. Job Satisfaction	Obsessive Passion	.09	1.25	.16	15.22***
	Job Security	.39***	5.07	t=1.86	
Model 4					
a. Job Security	Obsessive Passion	.17*	2.12	.02	4.53*
b. Career Satisfaction	Obsessive Passion	.17*	2.17	.02	4.72*
c. Career Satisfaction	Obsessive Passion	.08	1.17 <sup>b</sup>	.31	35.26***
	Job Security	.55***	7.98	t=2.10*	

**Legend:** DV: Dependent Variable; IV: Independent Variable;  $\beta$ : Standardized coefficient  $\beta$ ; \*\*\* $P < .001$ , \* $P < .05$ ; <sup>b</sup> full mediation; *t*: Sobel test score

**Figure 1.** Conceptual model of the mediating effects of job security on the relationships between passion (both harmonious and obsessive) and job/career satisfaction.



**Figure 2.** Coefficients of the mediating effects of job security on the relationships between passion (both harmonious and obsessive) and job/career satisfaction.



**Legend:**  $\beta$ : Standardized coefficient;  $***P < .001$ ,  $*P < .05$ ;  $\beta_1$  &  $\beta_3$  refer to Job satisfaction as a dependent variable;  $\beta_2$  &  $\beta_4$  refer to Career satisfaction as a dependent variable