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CAREER DECISION A TOUGH CHOICE: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF CAREER DECISION MAKING SELF- EFFICACY AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Career is a significant and a long term decision. It requires necessary skills and environment. The present study explores the role of Career Decision making Self- Efficacy (CDSE) and Career Aspirations Scale (CAS) among Pakistani University students. A convenient sample of 115 university students from the department of Psychology, University of Karachi were approached and they filled in the career aspirations scale and career decision making self- efficacy scale questionnaires in a group setting. It was hypothesized that career decision making self-efficacy will predict the three dimensions of career aspirations. A linear regression analysis was conducted with CDSE as a predicator of Achievement, Leadership and Education aspirations sub- components of CAS and results are in agreement with the hypothesis.

Keywords: *career, aspirations, self- efficacy, collectivist culture, achievement.*

INTRODUCTION

Career aspirations are defined as the best suited decision one has in mind in a given time period within the given resources. An individual's career choice develops through different developmental years. In the detailed analysis of career development in his book Gottfredson (1981) has delineated the career aspiration more to self-concept. The kind of images we hold in the mind and long for in future, the ways we want to see ourselves in time is based on environmental factors such as available opportunities and personality factors all contribute in career decision. Career aspirations are long- term career related goals. It is dependent on various factors such as background and the intrinsic plus extrinsic personality factors as noted by Summera and Bushra (2022). While, exploring the career aspirations of teenage students from 81 countries, it was noted that social background was a bigger determinant of whether a student will complete his degree from university. Students from less privileged background were more likely to complete their degree with male students aiming more for the information technology. Career development depend largely on self- efficacy, the confidence to perform a task. While career decision making is a tedious process involving personality variables and contextual variables, career decision making self-efficacy is the belief that an individual has in the ability to make a thorough career making decision. Feingold's (1974) research shows 46% of the career decision was accounted for by the grades, while for 47% their mental ability, while 7% of the students settled below their intelligence level. Choi and colleagues (2012) captured this mechanism to a greater length by focusing on self-appraisal, occupational appraisal, goal selection, planning, and problem solving.). Making it an elaborative process that requires the person to decide the long term career. The process usually starts at high school level where the school counselor's help children in coming up with their own ideas for

future decision. The career aspirations help the child to imagine and look for the ideas while the career decision making self-efficacy is required to through this process successfully. The better the confidence one has in the abilities to perform the higher aspirations be.

With the growing concern that the current education system in Pakistan is not training students based on future demands. Research shows that the concept of education in Pakistan centres on achieving degrees while having a skill is seen as under privileged idea for a future career. As noted by one of the leading author Bari (2025), the students in one of the focus group were inspired by the people who had earned government jobs' through channels. The students were neither interested in skill based jobs nor entrepreneurship. Their only goal was to get a government job. Bari (2025) also noted that the perception of skill is like meagre jobs. The generation that has just entered the university is the one has been in their high school through COVID 19 time when the classes were switched to online learning. While high school is also the time when most students evaluate careers for their future. Upon entering university, the AI had started to make its way to the developing countries. These factors made experiential learning opportunities less seldom available as noted by Mulji (2021) Born to the Gen X parents, for whom traditional organizational careers where decision making involved values related work, long term planning, long hour's labor, on site work conditions. Today's generation is preparing for more AI driven world witnessing a surge in careers outside traditional offices such as self- employed, borderless career and remote work presenting more financially lucrative opportunities (Ismail, 2016). The current trends of where do they see themselves in future, need to be explored in the light of factors that may account for by the career decisions making self -efficacy among university undergraduates. This leads us to the current research hypothesis:

There will be a relationship between career aspirations and career decision making self- efficacy among University students

Career decision making will predict the career aspirations among University students.

Methodology

Sample For the purpose of exploring the research questions, the data was gathered from participants enrolled in the initial two years of psychology department, University of Karachi. Morning and evening programs. Students aged around 18 to 25 years averaged around 22.36 years (SD=5.382). Out of total 115 students, 88.7% were females and 10.4% were males. 15.2% of the sample were full time employed, 40.2% were part time employed, 44.6% were not working when the data was collected.

Materials

Sociodemographic information: An indigenous questionnaire was used to assess about participants demographic information. Such as age, gender, year of education, parents education level, parents professional work.

Career Aspirations Scale The scale is developed by Gregor and O'Brien (2015). It has 24 items which give scores in the subscales for leadership career aspiration, achievement career aspirations, and educational career aspirations. The scale and its subscales show good internal consistency reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values generally above (.70), and often higher (e.g., in the .80s and .90s) and is a valid predictor for career related decision.

Career Decision Making Self Efficacy Scale

The Career Decision Making Self Efficacy Scale - Short Form developed by Betz and Klein (1996) consists of 25 items. It consists of five subscales that is Self- Appraisal, Occupational Information, Goal Selection, Planning and Problem Solving. Internal consistency: the total score of the CDSES-SF has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.93, indicating good internal consistency and is a valid criterion.

Procedure

A sample of one hundred and fifteen undergraduate students enrolled in morning and evening program of the psychology department, university of Karachi were reached out on the basis of convenience for the voluntary participation in this study. The participants were given instructions and the forms were filled out in a group format in real time. After administration they were thanked for their participation.

Ethical considerations: The research was conducted at University of Karachi. The consent form was signed by participants prior to entering

the study. No physical and psychological harm was expected in any form. The study was helpful to the students to gain an insight into the process of career decision making.

Result

Table 1

Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD	SK		KU	
						statistics	Std.error	Statistics	Std.error
CDSE	114	38.0	125.00	85.53	16.53	-.213	.226	.180	.449
CES	115	9.0	32.00	23.23	6.22	-.414	.226	-.807	.447
CLS	115	9.0	34.00	22.47	5.62	-.135	.226	-.454	.447
CAS	115	12.00	32.00	24.94	5.15	-.510	.226	-.633	.447

Table 2

Descriptive statistics and the correlation for the career aspiration and career decision making self-efficacy

		n	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1	Career Decision making Self -Efficacy	114	85.34	16.53	-			
2	Career aspiration subscale	115	24.94	5.15	.565**	-		
3	Career leadership subscale	115	22.47	5.62	.544**	.585**	-	
4	Career educational subscale	115	23.23	6.22	.520**	.693**	.520**	-

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Table 2 shows correlation between Career Decision making Self Efficacy subscales of Career Aspirations Scale-Revised (leadership aspirations, achievement aspirations, educational aspirations) **p <.01

Table 3

Regression coefficients of the Impact of Career Decision making Self Efficacy on the three subcomponents of Career aspiration scale (Achievement, Leadership and Education)

Variable	B	β	SE
Constant	10.098**		2.09
Achievement	.175**	.565	.02

R^2		.319		
F	52.450			
Constant		6.611		2.357
Leadership		.186**	.544	.027
R^2		.29		
F	47.04			
Constant		6.608		2.638
Education		.196*	.520	.030
R^2		.27		
F	41.503			

Note. N= 115
**p<.001, * p<.05

Table 3 shows the impact of career decision making self-efficacy on achievement aspirations among students. The R value of .31 revealed that the predictor variable explained .31% variance in the outcome variable with F (1,112) = 52.450, p < .001. The findings revealed that predictor variable positively predicted career aspirations. (β= .56, p < .001)

Further, it shows the impact of career decision making self-efficacy on leadership aspirations among students. The R value of .29 revealed that the predictor variable explained .29% variance in the outcome variable with F (1,112) = 47.04, p < .001. The findings revealed that CDSE positively predicted career aspirations. (β= .54, p <.001

Finally this table impact shows the impact of career decision making self-efficacy on leadership aspirations among students. The R value of .27 revealed that the predictor variable explained .27% variance in the outcome variable with F (1,112) = 41.503, p < .05. The findings revealed that predicted career aspirations. (β= .52, p < .05)

Discussion

Bandura (1971) asserted that our self-efficacy is essentially tied to available role models. The images of how we want to look alike in future shape stereotypic images in our brain. Before understanding the results of the present study, a look at the demographics of the parents, the participants of the study are born to, will help us a great deal in understanding the social, familial and cultural trends around career decision making. As we begin exploring the findings, there exists a moderate to high correlation between career aspirations and career decision making self-efficacy. Results reveal that a moderate relationship exist between CDSE and the three dimensions of the career aspirations namely achievement, education and leadership and the students have scored on the average moderate scores on the three domains. These findings are also supported by the conclusion drawn from Tanveer's (2025) research paper where she noted that it comes as a surprise that students are enthusiastic and hold high aspirations despite having limited exposure and access to resources. The asymmetry in the educational levels and work across the both gender of parents is evident as in most cases the mothers are more educated than fathers. On the other hand

when, it comes to work more fathers are working than mothers. Gottfredson (1981) noted that the process begins at formative years. A glimpse into the results showcase that the social and cognitive abilities of the individual, also the economic factors, job opportunities, mentorship opportunities and the interpersonal factors come together for a long term career related decision. It has been noted that career is shaped by factors both outside and inside the person.

A comparison of table 3, assert that self-efficacy is one of the significant factor in determining the course of development of career of an individual. The results of this study show that for the participants of this study, having high self- efficacy has contributed significantly to all three aspects of career aspirations with greater contribution particularly to the achievement aspirations. A Pakistani society is a collectivist society, wherein the authority has to be followed and respected. The learning abilities of Pakistani students has been studied by Ali and colleagues (2018) have noted that students believed that the quantity of information in their memory is what will take them above others and give them a respectful status in the society. As students gain confidence when they are reinforced by teachers for being the best and retaining large volume of information may be a contributing factor towards higher inclination towards achievement aspirations. Shah and colleagues (2010) noted, belonging to a background where parents have strict rules for education such as completing homework before going to a park and parents are themselves involved in their child's education alongside finding a mentor for them who can guide them on their future career aspirations based on their potentials, these people are usually family friends who have achieved a certain position in a collectivist society. These findings relate to the normative theory of decision making that underscore the importance of making the best suitable decision in the context of limited resources as note by Uzma and Erum (2013). This coupled with CDSE's operational definition the person is able to make a career decision indicates that if a person has adequate career planning, adequate self- appraisal, has the right set of problems solving skills, has gathered correct occupational information will be able to select appropriate goal (Taylor & Betz, 1983). The contribution of the career decision making self-efficacy to career aspiration is further explained by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) that considers three components of decision making such as self-efficacy, personal goals and outcome expectations. As the scale measures self-efficacy to decide for one particular career in the light of the personal goals. Having the right set of skills to decide, the students have been able to make right career decision (Kishor, 1981; Larkin, 1986). Mayrhofer and colleagues (2005) concluded the actual decision acts as a buffer against one's doubts about one's abilities

This result of this study is limited by the Sample drawn from Psychology department only. A bigger and diverse sample may give a more detailed understanding of the impact of CDSE on subcomponents of Career aspirations scale. More male representation in the sample is needed to see any significant gender differences. Embedded in the collectivist culture, a gender role based scale may be employed in future to understand the changing cultural concepts regarding gender roles. Career choices may be explored further to see if the students are actually committed to what they are opting considering the shift in career options as noted by Bari (2025). Also, it is paramount to explore whether generational changes have had any impact on the career decisions for which cohorts of different ages may also be compared.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that Career Decision making Self efficacy scores are a significant predictor of Career Aspirations Scale in the current sample of University students.

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