

# Self Efficacy and Career Choice Consideration among Undergraduate Students in A Private University in Malaysia

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## Abstract

Career choice that determines the role of individuals in the society, is the most critical decision for students who will graduate with diploma and bachelor's degree. Three aspects of self-efficacy; past performance, vicarious learning, and physiological and emotional reaction, were examined to affirm the positive relationship between undergraduate students' self-efficacy and career choice. In this study, the relationship of self-efficacy and undergraduate students' career choice consideration in a private institution in Malaysia was investigated. This research implemented mixed methods to study the aspects of self-efficacy towards the career decision making of 200 undergraduate students from a private university in Malaysia and 10 students were selected for an interview session to find the factors influencing career choice. It was found that physiological and emotional reaction is the strongest contributor to students' decision in choosing career, followed by students' sympathetic experience or vicarious learning and the least is the previous or past performance that students achieved. The results indicated that the relationship of self-efficacy and students' career choice is positive and that universities play a huge role in providing guidance and support for the undergraduates in choosing a career pathway.

**Keywords:** Self-Efficacy, Career Choice, Undergraduates

## Introduction

There would be a stage in life that students will have to decide for their career that would assist them in planning their main functions in the community. This group of individuals would face dilemma if they are not exposed to what really matters in choosing the right career pathway. Thus, this investigation seeks to extend the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) as presented by Lent, Brown, and Hackett in 1994 to find out the reasons or rationale related to career choice considerations among undergraduate students in a private university in Malaysia.

Career could be defined as the workforce and future growth of someone through life. It does not only enlarge the social circle but socio-economic status as well. In addition, career

decision must be done as it serves as an impression to the individual's future and also the role that graduates must play within the society (Olaosebikan and Ayoka, 2014). Occupational options are frequently influenced by sociocultural elements (Swanson & Gore, 2000), individual variables, personal and social qualities, social networking, and supporting components, like the challenges men face in certain professions like nursing.

A study conducted by Feldman (2003); Germenjis and DeBoeck (2003) found that students wish for an extended time to decide on an initial career path because of the difficulties they must decide on a career. Several studies found that, to form a career choice, students usually face a dilemma during this stage in their lives (Bandura, 2001). Many students are clueless in choosing a career Gathigia (2011) and this is often intensified by complexity of youngsters transitioning from school age to working life (Koech, 2016). Koech, then added that students did not have the foundation of academic qualities and the proper attitude when they started enrolling in an academic programme. In order to comprehend the certain factors of influence, educators should explore further than the students as it could help mould students' point of view and open the door to new and untraditional career choices, as agreed by (Reed and Case, 2003).

Majority of the society view how efficient they are before developing interest in a field or career. As mentioned by Hackett (2002), there are four main elements that could affect self-efficacy, which are past performance, vicarious experiencing, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional attachment.

### **The Current Study**

The confusion to determine a career pathway since the secondary level education would still exist even up to the tertiary education, in which their career pathway would be affected if they chose an incorrect programme of study. Only after graduation, it was found out that there was a gap in their academic performance with their career choices. This gap could be one of the reasons that the rate of unemployment is undeniably worrying. In studies conducted in the past, among the top rationale of career choice decisions is self-efficacy.

The main purpose of this study is to examine to what extent Self-Efficacy as SCCT model, established by Lent et al (1994, 2000, 2002) impacts undergraduate students' career choice decision. In order to assess the younger generation's growth in education and career, more studies must be conducted. In addition, studies in the past did not investigate the possibility of the role of tertiary education especially the university management in providing guidance and thus aspiring students in their career pathway.

Using selected undergraduate students from a private university in Malaysia as the respondents, this research comes with the objective to recreate and align Lent, et al (2003)'s research in finding out the relationship between self-efficacy and career choice decision among undergraduates in a private university. Likewise, it will figure out the decision that students make in their career and the value of the support provided by the university throughout their studies.

### **Research Objective**

To identify the relationship between self-efficacy and career choice consideration among undergraduate students in a private university in Malaysia.

### **Research Questions**

- a) Is there a relationship between Self-Efficacy and Career Choice Consideration among undergraduate students in a private university?
- b) How do graduating students in a private university consider their career choice?

### **Significance of Research**

The role of education in building a career pathway for students will ensure workforce sustainability and talent management. The outcomes from this study can guide higher learning institution in developing suitable career guidance to avoid from making wrong decisions which later can definitely help in the issues of joblessness among the graduates.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Career Choice**

Career, is linked to the workforce which can give an impact to one's life and is usually defined as a set of attitude and experience (Humayon, 2018; Abbasi & Sarwat, 2014), whereby choice is a step taken in highlighting from the most preferred to the least preferred. Navin (2004) stated that career exploration is considered to be crucial before making a decision in a career as a success recipe for a brighter future.

#### **The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)**

This theory springs from the idea of self-efficacy by Bandura and was introduced by Lent et al. (1994). The SCCT indicates that the perceptions of interest, self-efficacy and outcome expectations often produce priorities that might influence the selection of a career. Interest is defined as a personal preference or non-preference and an informal absence of concern a few professions' achievement. Secondly, as claimed by Joshi and Kuhn (2011), self-efficacy is defined by one's ability to accumulate the necessary strength, intellectual resources and activities to manage a situation under any circumstances.

#### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy influences how people think, feel, motivate themselves and act, as stated by (Zulkosky, 2009). This shows that there is an impact to individual characteristics and outcomes. In accordance with that, Al-Mansur et.al (2018) stressed that besides motivation, self-efficacy is equally important for an individual's interaction with others and the surroundings.

In their research, Beatson, Berg and Smith (2019) indicated that by focusing on the enhancement of self-efficacy, it is attainable for students to achieve higher in life. Maddux (2012), concluded that self-efficacy is not an apparent skill. It is what an individual can do with his or her abilities under different circumstances. It does not simply predict an individual's behaviour but it is focused on what an individual believe he or she can do.

#### **The Positive Impact of Self-Efficacy towards Career Awareness**

Nasir and Lin (2013) showed the significance between self-efficacy and career awareness among students by implying that students with high career awareness possess high self-efficacy. This is aligned to the study of Schaffer and Taylor (2012) that a positive relationship existed between self-efficacy and social job pursuit.

There is a better career decision-making by applying the social cognitive career theory on a group of science majors, as conducted by (Mills, 2009). It was also found that background factors such as parent support and aptitude were also important contributors.

Furthermore, Ballout (2009) implied that self-efficacy acts as a facilitator of positive career commitment effects (salary level and career satisfaction) on career success. Employees showed gratitude on high pay level and have higher satisfaction in their career when they have clearer awareness of self-efficacy and strong commitment in their career.

In addition, Charleston and Leon (2016) established that students' career choice could be accelerated by self-efficacy in a specific order. The first was from an early exposure and extended engagement on the subject matter, followed by moral, educational and financial support, noteworthy exploration and assignments, and the significance of mentorship. This order represented the elements of self-efficacy (vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, prior performance and, physiological and emotional arousal or attachment).

Moreover, Michle and Nelson (2006) asserted that educational and job-related experiences could enhance career self-efficacy and thus lead to success for IT-related occupations.

### **The Negative Impact of Self-Efficacy Towards Career Awareness**

On the contrary, Fatima et al (2017) investigated that the relationship between self-efficacy and career development is negative, in which male students showed high level of self-efficacy than females. On another note, females scored higher than males in a career decision scale.

### **Enhancing Self-efficacy in Making Career Choices**

Reddan (2015) noted that certain learning assessments and tasks could support students' self-efficacy and thus making optimistic career choices. In addition, Lam, Michelle Chee-Kuan (2016) determined that the exposure of a career course on students' self-efficacy in career decision-making minimized the difficulties students faced and this could be seen significantly effective for female than male students.

### **The Role of University in Undergraduates' Career Choice**

Career self-efficacy is a component that influences career preparedness, including career planning in terms of worth, aptitude, and abilities, as well as family, organisation, social, and economic variables. Therefore, it is important the universities organize preparatory events or courses so that students could participate to improve the level of self-efficacy hence improving their career readiness.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design, Sampling, Instrument and Scale**

Quantitative and qualitative measurements were employed in this research. The instruments used for data gathering were questionnaires from 200 undergraduate students which is about ten per cent of the institution's population and 10 students who are in their final year were selected for interview session.

The instrument consisted of questions regarding the respondents' self-evaluation of self-efficacy when considering a career. An adaptation of previous instruments from related studies were done to construct the questionnaire. The questionnaire included the important elements of self-efficacy such as prior performance, vicarious learning and physiological and emotional reactions. Likert-type scale, ranges from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree) was implemented as the self-rating items completed by respondents. After completing the

questionnaire, interview session was conducted for 10 random respondents. The interview included questions on the factors they considered when choosing a career.

### Data Analysis Technique

Statistical Package for the Social science (SPSS) version 26 was utilized to analyse the data obtained. This research had conducted reliability test, regression, and correlation analysis.

### Reliability Test

Table 1 presents the results of the reliability test. Data is considered reliable if they have Cronbach's alpha values more than 0.7 (Julie Pallant, 2005)

Table 1

#### Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
Prior Performance	.653	3
Vicarious Learning	.860	3
Physiological and Emotional Reaction	.833	6
Career Choice	.697	5

### Findings

#### Correlation Analysis

The relationship between dependent and independent variables can be shown in the results from Table 2 below. Statistically, when significant value (2 tailed) is 0.05 or below, it can be considered as significant (Greenland et al., 2016). This is seen in Table 2 below that there were significant relationship between the determiners of self-efficacy towards career choice.

Table 2

#### Correlation Analysis

		PP	VL	PER	CC
PP	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
VL	Pearson Correlation	.618**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
PER	Pearson Correlation	.730**	.788**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
CC	Pearson Correlation	.565**	.645**	.612**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	

Note: \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). N = 221

### Regression Analysis

Table 3 shows the regression analysis which could determine the affecting variables on the occupational options among this group of undergraduate students. The correlation R (0.678) connected the three independent variables with the dependent variable. The R Square value is 0.459, after putting into consideration the intercorrelations among the three independent variables. Hence, 45.9% of the undergraduate students' career choice is explained by the

independent variables. The result of the analysis in Table 3 shows that the dependent variable “Career Choice” could explain 45.9% of the model.

Table 3

*Model Summary*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.678 <sup>a</sup>	.459	.452	.56889	2.111

a. Predictors: (Constant), PER, PP, VL

b. Dependent Variable: CC

Table 4 shows that the significant value of the model is 0.000. Since it was than 0.05, the model had achieved the significance.

Table 4

*ANOVA*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	59.685	3	18.895	61.474	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	70.229	217	.324		
	Total	129.914	220			

a. Dependent Variable: CC

b. Predictors: (Constant), PER, PP, VL

The relationship between independent variables and dependent variable are shown in Table 5 below. It can be concluded that physiological and emotional reaction is the strongest variable, since it shows the largest beta coefficient at the value of 0.378. Therefore, in this study, this variable contributed the most on the career choice among undergraduate students. At the beta coefficient value at 0.258, vicarious learning is the next contributor in career choice and with beta coefficient value of 0.220, prior performance is considered the minor contribution during decision-making of career by the undergraduate students.

Table 5

*Multiple Regression**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.702	.151		4.643	.000
	PP	.220	.092	.176	2.401	.017
	VL	.258	.083	.254	3.119	.002
	PER	.378	.112	.317	3.376	.001

a. Dependent Variable: CC

### Interview Analysis

During the interview session, ten undergraduate students from a private university were selected. The interview is aimed to identify the career choice consideration among undergraduate students.

Based on the interview session, most of the candidates agreed that their choice of career consideration was greatly influenced by their own interest. It was agreed by the following candidate in their statement

*I'm so into numbers. I want to work and live with numbers (Interviewee 3)*

*Kids are truly awesome...I love them...I wanna be a teacher in kindergarten...(Interviewee 2 and 6)*

*I like social media and I cant live without it..it will be great to have a career related to the social media..(Interviewee 8)*

The interviewees did mention about the courses and programmes in University which have helped them to explore more about their career and make an early decision of the career choice consideration

*Yes, definitely..the courses have inspired us to decide on the specialization and later the specific careers based on our interest, skills and qualification (Interviewee 1, 7)*

*My mother and father are working in education as teachers/lecturers and I want to be a teacher too..it is just that I am not so sure to teach what subjects but surprisingly after attending several courses I have decided to be an English teacher...(Interviewee 3)*

*I do realize that I love numbers..luckily numbers of courses are calculation based and yes this is very important as a future businessman! (Interviewee 5)*

Universities have played great role in exposing the students to the future career. Many activities were designed with the objective to introduce the career pathways in the related field to the students.

*My university did call speakers from industry such as Kidzania, Legoland, Hotels etc (Interviewee 6 &9)*

*There were many workshops and seminars in my university and we have to attend it!. For me it was good and I could see how challenging the future is for me! (Interviewee 7 &8)*

*I did realize my university have been working hard all this while in ensuring each of us are ready for career. The workshops on career counselling, career clinics etc were always conducted on semester basis (Interviewee 10)*

### Conclusion

Basically, this research has confirmed that physiological and emotional connection are the main factors in determining the choice of career in the future. Next, is the vicarious learning and finally the prior performance. Afterall, it shows that the students at the undergraduate level are flexible and positively accept new knowledge and pay less concern on the previous achievement.

There is a positive correlation between the self-efficacy and career choice consideration based on the sampling to the undergraduates in higher learning institution (non - government). Besides, the study has indicated that career choice consideration among the



students were based on their interest and exposure. Universities played a big role in exposing the students to the career pathways through the available courses, programmes and industry-based activities. This study can be a great manual in guiding and assisting the students towards choosing the best career for the future. On the other note, the universities should keep on inspiring the students by nurturing them towards career preparation and readiness. The universities should be looking forward in taking these opportunities by engaging the students with the real industry player in the market. The outcomes will be positive and can help the country to control the unemployment rate and thus achieving the vision and mission of the country 2030 by upgrading the standard of living among Malaysian.

Overall, the outcomes of this study have decided self-efficacy do have an impact towards the career-based decision making among the undergraduates' students. Thus, the curriculum designer in the higher learning institution should embark into the journey of searching, designing, and implementing the new teaching tools, teaching pedagogies which can purely support the students for the best learning experiences for future career.

### **Recommendations**

It is highly recommended for the students to explore the future career ready programme which seems to be available in higher learning institution and the industry and for the university to come out with solid programmes and curriculum revision to ensure the teaching and experiences gain will be in line with the need of the industry. The findings may be more significant and more valid consequences can be created when the study would be repeated on a broader sample.

Poh Li et al (2011) reported that, with the proper elements of positive social domains and communication with the surrounding, the career self-efficacy level will definitely be upgraded. In a further exploration, programme planning is needed in order to furnish students with the correct career information, or suggested education schemes to improve the career development and concept of understanding one's self.

### **Significant of The Research**

Students' professional pathways will be shaped by their education, which will also support talent management and the sustainability of the workforce. The findings of this study can help higher education institutions create appropriate career recommendations so that students don't make poor choices that later exacerbate the problem of graduate unemployment.

### **Co-Author Contribution**

There is no conflict of interest in this article. Siti Nor Amira Baharudin carried out the field work, wrote the research methodology and overlook the writeup of the whole article. Teo Yeong Chin prepared the literature review and did the data entry. Both authors out the statistical analysis and interpretation of the results.

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