

# Self Efficacy and Career Choice Consideration among Secondary School Students in Petaling District

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## Abstract

The relationship of self-efficacy and students' career choice consideration in secondary schools in Petaling district is explored through this study. This mixed mode of qualitative and quantitative research explored the perspective of self-efficacy towards a career decision making of 200 students from secondary schools in Petaling district through adapted questionnaires and interviews. Being the most critical decision for students, career choice determines the future role in the society and the interest in occupational consideration that can be mould by the environment; it can start at early age in schools. Through the aspects of prior performance, vicarious learning, and physiological and emotional reaction or attachment, this study affirms the positive connection between student's self-efficacy and career choice.

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## 1. Introduction

One of the student's most significant decisions is the choice of their careers that could determine their future roles in society. The interest in occupational consideration can start at a very young age during primary or secondary level schooling, and the school environment could mould this behaviour of interest. With that, this research aims to extend the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) as presented by Lent, Brown, and Hackett in 1994 to determine what are the factors or predictors of occupational interest and choice considerations among selected secondary school students in Petaling district, Malaysia.

### Problem Statement

Career may be characterized as the occupation and advancement of a person through life. Career does not only increase the relationship with other people, but career also can increase the person's socio-economic status. It is a critical aspect to make a career decision because it will give an impact to the individual's entire future and the role that graduates have to play in the society (Olaosebikan and Ayoka, 2014). Career choices

are frequently constrained by sociocultural elements (Swanson & Gore, 2000), individual variables, personal and social qualities, connections centrality, and auxiliary components, such as the challenges women face in certain professions like management.

A study conducted by Feldman (2003) and Germenjis and DeBoeck (2003) found that students are having difficulties to choose a career and need a longer time to choose the initial career path. Several studies found that students usually face a dilemma to make a career choice in their lives (Bandura, 2001). On the other hand, misfit graduates are considered as the reason why the country has high unemployment and underemployment rate (Pascual, 2014). Furthermore, Koech (2016) also noted that this is exacerbated by difficulties of youths in transition to working life from school age. Choosing a career is a major turning point in students' life, and according to Gathigia (2011), many students are inept in determining their choice of career. Koech later added that certain students lack basic academic foundation and attitude preparation as they began studying their courses. If a wrong choice has been made, the result will be fatigue in work, and the feelings of regret, discomfort,

and complaints, all of which equates to a horrible life experience (Abdullah, 2009).

Educators must understand that in order to comprehend the key role of certain factors of influence, they must reach beyond the students as it could lead to the development of strategic collaborations that could help change students' view and open the door to new and untraditional career choices, as agreed by Reed and Case (2003). These factors of influence include personal, community or social media. For students, it is vital for them to gain access to career advice; especially those parents are unemployed or have limited experience in formal education. According to Makoni (2010), this intergenerational trend poses a challenge, as these students that has no or little experience known to them are inclined to have low exposure about career information.

It is always a confusion for students to determine their career pathway upon completing their SPM level. Beginning from their PT3 results, students are oriented to choose their career choices based on their placement in either Science Stream or in Arts Stream. This problem sometimes escalates up till their university studies where students tend to choose a wrong field of study to support their career pathway. Upon graduation, there tends to be a mismatch between their education qualifications with their job choices.

If this issue is not addressed, it may affect student's occupational consideration, which in turn may hinder their ability to choose the best career pathway. Often a time there's a career mismatch among graduates when they join the workforce. This mismatch could be one of the factors contributing to the unemployment rate among graduates. In the previous studies, one of the main predictors of occupational considerations is self-efficacy. In managing outcome expectations, most people would display certain behaviour that they believe can secure them success and positive response. People develop interests largely based on their views about their self-efficacy, which acts as an important basis of outcome expectations. The outcome expectation such as satisfaction and social prestige are attained from typical belief of developing sustained interests in activities they are confident in performing well. Hackett (2002) also said that four main bases, which are individual achievements, vicarious experiencing, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional condition, could affect one's self-efficacy.

Many graduates' career choice does not continue from what they have studied in the higher learning. There is a mismatch in their career pathway. This research is aimed to identify to what extend Self-Efficacy in the SCCT Model, as developed by Lent, Brown & Hackett (1994, 2000, 2002) impacts students' career choice consideration. In Malaysia, many studies have been done on career choice of higher learning students (Ching S.K and Hung Kee, D.M., 2012; Siam C.S., et al. 2013;

Khalilur Rahman, M. et al. 2014; Ramachandanram R. et al. 2015; Muhamad H, et al. 2016 Rosdi, M.J et al. 2013; Mohd. F. et al. 2010) only a few studies were conducted on secondary school students (Lau, P.L et al. 2011; Nasir, R. and Lin, L.S. 2013; Huern S.Y. 2014). More study is needed using SCCT to assess how well they generalize to the growth of younger peoples' education and career, through different fields of study streams, and to people from different cultures. The past studies did not also look into the possible gaps between the student's aspiration or personality and the career pathway programs or intervention that were conducted.

Using selected secondary students from the Petaling district as sample, this study aims to replicate and support Lent, et al. (2003)'s study to examine the connection between self-efficacy and career choice consideration of secondary school students. Furthermore, it will also explore the students' career choice consideration and the effectiveness of career pathway programs/interventions conducted among the students.

### **Research Objective**

To identify the relationship between Self-Efficacy and students' career choice consideration in secondary school students in Petaling district.

### **Research Questions**

- a) Is there a relationship between Self-Efficacy and Career Choice Consideration in secondary school students? Questionnaires?
- b) How do secondary school students consider their career choice?

### **Significance of Research**

The role of education in developing a career pathway for students will ensure sustainability in the workforce and available talent management. The findings of the research can assist school counsellors to align their career pathway program to match students' personality. Early detection of the mismatch can be rectified. Besides, this research can be useful for higher learning institute to develop a suitable career pathway module for schools to reduce the mismatch of career, hence, reduce the unemployment rate among graduates.

Future research can focus into the development of effective interventions on career choice for student's satisfaction to embark further studies at higher learning institutions.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Career Choice**

Career can be described as a set of experience and attitude, which can be associated to work, and it could transform the individual's entire life (Humayon 2018; Abbasi & Sarwat, 2014), whereas choice is a process of selecting the most preferred one from the other options.

Navin (2004) stated that in order to become successful and satisfied in the future, exploring career options is considered important prior to career decision-making.

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

This theory is derived from the theory 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 could influence the choice of a major or career. In perception, interest is defined as an individual preference or non-preference and a casual absence of concern about a profession's accomplishments. Secondly, an outcome expectation refers to the views of an individual on the consequences of carrying out an action, while self-efficacy refers to the opinion in one's ability to accumulate the requisite energy, cognitive resources and activities to cope with a given situation, as stated by Joshi and Kuhn (2011). While SCCT is widely used to understand career choice in different settings and decision contexts, these outcome-expectancy models are unable to capture other important factors that may influence interest in a major or career topic in entirety. As an example, SCCT does not capture the direct impact towards career choice from socio-cultural environment, which was documented having vital implications on a person's attitudes towards a career), although Lent, et al. suggest a possible indirect influence to SCCT.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Zulkosky (2009) concluded that 'Self-efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves and act'. This concept is important as it gives an impact to behaviour and outcomes. Self-efficacy is important, as stressed by Al-Mansur et al (2018) beside motivation and an individual's objectives towards all changes through interaction with others and the environments. Furthermore, he did focus on the personality factors, the context, learning experiences and two-way communication between individual and their surroundings in shaping individuals' behaviour towards the choice of career in future. Beatson, Berg and Smith (2019) in his research provide pathways by indicating that students' higher achievement can be attained by focusing to enhance their self-efficacy. Distinguishing if from related concepts in one of the best ways to get a clear sense of how self-efficacy is described and measured. In Maddux (2012)'s words, "self-efficacy is not perceived skill; it is what I think under certain circumstances I can do with my abilities. My beliefs about my ability to perform basic and irrelevant motor actions are not concerned, but my beliefs about my ability to organize and orchestrate skills and capacities in evolving and challenging situations are concerned. Self-efficacy beliefs are not simply predictions about behaviour. Self-efficacy is concerned not with that I believe I will do but with what I believe I can do."

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

The significant connection between self-concept and career awareness among students is showed from the studies of Nasir and Lin (2013) that students with higher levels of career awareness have higher self-concept or more positive outlook.

A better career decision-making could be resulted from the crucial development of self-efficacy, interest and goals in science by application of social cognitive career theory, as done by Mills (2009) to a group of science majors. It was also found that background factors such as parent support and aptitude were also important contributors.

Self-efficacy is denoted by Ballout (2009) as a facilitator of positive career commitment effects (salary level and career satisfaction) on both objective and subjective career success. By having clearer sense of self-efficacy and strong commitment to their career, employees would appreciate high salary level and greater career satisfaction.

Moreover, Charleston and Leon (2016) concluded that self-efficacy accelerates students' decisions to pursue a career in a specific order. The first was through early exposure and prolonged engagement on the subject matter (vicarious learning experiences), followed by moral, educational and financial support (verbal persuasion), significant exploration and tasks (performance accomplishment), and the importance of mentorship (physiological and emotional arousal).

However, Michle and Nelson (2006) asserted that for IT-based occupations, self-efficacy is the most important factor in differentiating between individuals on a technical versus a non-technical career track regardless of gender. In addition, occupational self-efficacy that could be increased through educational and job-related experiences could lead to success in the field.

As in the study of Schaffer and Taylor (2012), a positive connection between self-efficacy and social job search existed, where self-efficacy became a dominant behaviour predictor in job search than social support.

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

In contrast, Fatima et al (2017) investigated the connection between self-efficacy with career development among university students. In her studies, she found that the relationship between self-efficacy and career development is negative, where male students showed high level of self-efficacy than females, in self-efficacy scale. In career decision scale, females scored higher score in career decision-making than males.

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

Reddan (2015) in his studies determined that students' self-efficacy in making positive career choices could be

supported by certain learning activities and assessments. In relation to employability and their knowledge of specific occupations, students would increase their awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses perceived the course. Lam, Michelle Chee-Kuan (2016) reviewed that the interventions of a career course on students' self-efficacy in career decision-making reduced students' overall career indecision and decision-making struggles, significantly more effective for female students than male students.

### 3. Research Methodology

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

This research employed both quantitative and qualitative strategies in a single study. For sampling purposes, purposive sampling was selected with 200 respondents using questionnaires and interviews as data gathering instruments. Each instrument was divided into Section A and consisted of questions on respondents' demographic profiles whereas Section B dealt with respondents' evaluation on their self-efficacy towards the consideration of choosing a career. Regarding the questionnaires, previous instruments were adapted and the major

components of self-efficacy, which are prior performances, vicarious learning and, physiological and emotional reactions, are the selected determiners towards career choice factor. Respondents completed the questionnaire by self-rating items on a 5-point, Likert-type scale, ranges from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). In conducting the interviews, 10 respondents were interviewed after they have completed the questionnaire. Each respondent spent thirty minutes to answer interview questions focused on the aspects they considered in order to choose a career.

#### Reliability Test

The internal consistency of the scale such as reliability and validity for each item was assessed using Cronbach's alpha as it is considered the most accepted measure of reliability. Table 1 presents the results of the reliability test. The variables for this study had excellent reliability with coefficient of more than 0.7. According to Julie Pallant (2005), the data are reliable if they have Cronbach's alpha values of more than 0.7 and the items must be deleted or changed if they are not reliable.

Table 1: Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
Prior Performance	.733	3
Vicarious Learning	.896	3
Physiological and Emotional Reaction	.882	6
Career Choice	.697	3

#### Data Analysis Technique

This study used Statistical Package for the Social science (SPSS) version 20 to analyse the data. This research had conducted reliability test, regression, and correlation analysis.

Table 2 shows the results for the correlation analysis to determine the significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The variables are considered statistically significant when the significant value (2 tailed) is 0.05 or below (Greenland et al., 2016). Table 2 shows that there were significant relationships between the components of self-efficacy towards career choice.

### 4. Findings

#### Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

		PP	VL	PER	CC
PP	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
VL	Pearson Correlation	.739**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
PER	Pearson Correlation	.810**	.843**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
CC	Pearson Correlation	.624**	.628**	.669**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	

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

#### Regression Analysis

The results of regression analysis could determine the influential variables on the undergraduates' career choice among secondary students in Petaling district. The three independent variables shown in Table 3 were entered into

the regression model. The correlation R (0.690) connected the three independent variables with the dependent variable. After considering all the intercorrelations among the three independent variables,

the R Square value is 0.476. Thus, the independent variables could explain 47.6% of the secondary students' career choice. The result of the analysis in Table 3 shows that the dependent variable "Career Choice" could

explain 47.6% of the model. Table 4 shows that the significant value of the model is 0.000. Thus, the model had reached the significance since it was less than 0.05.

Table 3: Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.690 <sup>a</sup>	.476	.469	.55986	2.083

b. Dependent Variable: CC

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

Table 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	dF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	61.897	3	20.632	65.826	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	68.016	217	.313		
	Total	129.914	220			

a. Dependent Variable: CC

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

In Table 5, the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable are shown. At value 0.345, it is the largest beta coefficient of the physiological and emotional reaction. Thus, it can be said that physiological and emotional reaction is the strongest variable, which made the most contribution on the career

choice in this study. It is followed by prior performance with the beta coefficient value of 0.210, and the least contribution towards the career choice is vicarious learning with the beta coefficient value of 0.183.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.029	.121		8.518	.000
	PP	.198	.081	.210	2.464	.015
	VL	.145	.074	.183	1.968	.050
	PER	.313	.097	.345	3.232	.001

a. Dependent Variable: CC

### Hypotheses Testing Results

To determine positive connection between self-efficacy and the career choice of secondary school students in Petaling district, multiple regression analysis were utilised. Here, a positive relationship is considered when the significant value is equivalent or less than 0.05 (Greenland et al., 2016). Table 5 shows the significant value for prior performance is 0.15. Therefore, this proved that a significant connection between prior performance and the career choice of the students is evident. The analyses were also used to determine the positive connection between vicarious learning and the career choice from the same samples, with value for vicarious learning is 0.05 as shown in Table 5, signified a

relationship between extrinsic motivation and the career choice of the students. The multiple regression analysis was also used to determine the same connection between physiological and emotional reaction and the career choice Table 5 shows that the significant value for physiological and emotional reaction is 0.01 that is less than 0.05. Hence, a significant relationship between physiological and emotional reaction and the career choice existed among the students.

### Interview Analysis

For the interview, ten secondary school students from the Petaling district were selected. The fundamental point of the interview is to identify the career choice consideration among secondary school students.

Table 6: Career Choices among Secondary School Students

Item	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I will choose my career choice based on my interest in a particular occupation.	16	1	3
My parents' occupations determine my choice of career.	9	5	6
Thinking about career choice now is a waste of time.	5	-	15

Table 6 shows how secondary school students consider their career choice. 60% of them will choose their career based on their interest. 30% of the respondents have chosen to relax and see the pathway first and the remaining 10% will leave it to their parents to decide on the best career pathway.

40% of the interviewees claimed that parents occupation have inspired them to be interested in certain field of interest. Parents have inspired them through sharing of their working experiences inclusive of the salary received, benefits gained, work environments, the opportunity to climb up the ladder and also the challenges

in the workplace. 60% were unsure and could not make any decision when it comes to the influence of parents occupation towards their career consideration.

60% of the respondents believed that thinking about career is very important and worth the time spent. They also mentioned that they were always in discussion with family, friends, and relatives on what the best career to explore in the future. The remaining 40% were not very serious thinking about the career choice in the future. They would prefer to relax and enjoy the moment until they reach the stage where making decision about career is the main priority.

*Transcribing their responses*

Table 7: Responses Transcription

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Theme</i>
<i>Student 2: My major interest is in playing game. I would prefer a career related to game</i>	<i>Career choice based on their interest</i>
<i>Student 5: Most of my time I spend on Instagram, twitter. It will be great if I can work through these 2 mediums.</i>	
<i>Student 3 and 6: I wanna be an educator in Early Childhood. I love kids</i>	<i>Career Choice was never been discussed and explored</i>
<i>Student 1 and 4: I love numbers. I should be an accountant then!</i>	
<i>Student 7 and 10: I just follow the flow. I will see first.</i>	
<i>Student 9: I have no feelings. I don't really know what I wanna do</i>	<i>Career Choice will be decided by parental involvement.</i>
<i>Student 8: I just let my parents to decide. I will follow what they say!</i>	
<i>Student 8: Yes, I will definitely follow the path that my parents have gone through</i>	<i>Influence of Parents towards career choice</i>
<i>Student 7,9 and 10: Maybe I will follow my parent's trait but I am not pretty sure about it!</i>	
<i>Student 1,2 and 4: Yes, definitely Parents opinion involve too in career choice, but it is not necessarily to follow my parents career pathway</i>	
<i>Student 3: My Parents are both teachers in Primary and Secondary School. What they like and what I like is almost the same.</i>	
<i>Student 5: My dad works in Astro (media industry) and he has influenced me to be active in social media as the new platform of communication. I really enjoy it!</i>	
<i>Student 6: I love teaching kids as my mom owns a nursery. I do help whenever school holiday or I have</i>	

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free time.

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*Student 1: I foresee the importance of thinking about career. I have to be in charge of it.* Thinking about career choice is importance

*Student 2: I have always think about gaming as a future career*

*Student 3: Yes I always think about career since my childhood time. My parents do talk to me frequently about this*

*Student 4: I have started to think about it once I am in the secondary school.*

*Student 5: I have been thinking about career to explore after my UPSR*

*Student 6: Of course we have to start to think about career!*

*Student 7: I don't really think about it. Maybe later*

*Student 8: I don't want to think that much. Just let my parents do it.*

*Student 9: It is important but I don't want to seriously think about it.*

*Student 10: Quite important but I just want to relax first. I will start to think maybe after SPM.*

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## 5. Conclusion

This study formed a basis that most respondents are influenced by their physiological and emotional attachment to choose a career in the future, in which can be related to parents' involvement and influence. It is then followed by their prior performance in a certain subject and had developed some interest in choosing a career, which is associated to their performance as well as their interest.

The samples from secondary school students in the Petaling district proved that the positive relationship between self-efficacy and career choice is a strong consideration for them to determine their career options. It is assumed that this study could assist and guide students to choose a field of study later on in the tertiary level. As a result, secondary schools can develop policies and initiatives to support students in career planning and prepare them for their tertiary education. For instance, schools may initiate pre- and post-test on the elements of self-efficacy for secondary school students as early as in the lower secondary. This study could also bring opportunity to higher education provider to promote their programmes. From this study, the government can introduce several projects for secondary school students to assist them in their career to mitigate the unemployment rate issue. Moreover, the decrease of unemployment rate can help Malaysia in achieving the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 by improving the living standard of citizens.

In addition, the findings confirmed that self-efficacy had a significant influence on that particular secondary students' choice of career. Thus, authorities in schools must identify the perceptions and factors that could influence the students' career choice by designing and

executing tools to support the students' study plan, which could lead to enhancing their career development.

## 6. Recommendations

In order to carry out a better understanding of the relation between self-efficacy and career choice, it is suggested that students should go through some exploration programmes. Poh Li et al (2011) reported that the level of self-efficacy in careers could be increased with the elements of encouragement, support, experience and interaction with the environment. As this explored further, programme planning is required to provide students with career information and prescribed, or recommended education initiatives to enhance their career maturity and self-concept.

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