

**CAREER DECISION MAKING SELF-EFFICACY, GOAL STABILITY AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**Tamkeen Saleem<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Aly\*<sup>2</sup> and Seema Gul<sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan.<sup>2</sup>Human Resource Department, National Tuberculosis Control Program, Islamabad, Pakistan.<sup>3</sup>Department of Psychology, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan.**\*Corresponding Author: Muhammad Aly**

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**ABSTRACT**

There is a gigantic interest in present era regarding career decision making, career selection and satisfaction that can be traced since the educational period when students are required to make choices for their career. The job market has experienced marked transformations, unpredictability in career trajectories and employment opportunities. Therefore, the process of developing vocational identity is now a challenging task than before. A positive sense of self, allows an individual to position oneself to engage in developing meaningful goals and sustain a sense of well-being and accomplishment. Based on this perspective of self-psychology, the purpose of the present study was to assess the relationship of career decision making self-efficacy and goal stability with academic achievement. The instruments used to measure the variables of the study were demographic Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy – Short Form (CDMSE-SF), Goal Instability Scale (GIS) and Cumulative Grade Point Average. A sample of 150 University students (Male n=75, Female n=75) participated for the present study. Frequency and percentage was computed for the demographic variables. In order to determine the findings, results were analyzed by the use of Regression analysis and t-test. The results revealed Goal Stability to be a significant predictor of Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy. The results revealed Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy to be a significant predictor of Academic Achievement. Career decision making self-efficacy and goal stability can be further developed in the students via professional career counseling that can enhance the academic achievement among the students.

**KEYWORDS:** Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy, Goal Stability and Academic Achievement.**INTRODUCTION**

Researchers in career psychology have produced a significant studies on the relationships between career constructs, personality traits, goal instability, career decidedness, decision making and self-efficacy (DeWitz, Woolsey, & Walsh, 2009; Savickas, Briddick, & Watkins, 2002; Turner, Chandler, & Heffer, 2009).

When considering major life decisions, special attention is often given to deciding on a career path. Perhaps this occurs for many people because career involves a combination of values, interests, skills, and abilities that relate to a total life experience. Career indecision is a significant research topic in career research (Germeijs & Boeck, 2002). While exploration of career decision-making is important, it is often overlooked till people formally begin to consider career options. In essence, attention to specific characteristics of the individual that impact decision outcomes is lacking compared to the focus that has been placed on the decision situation and decision task.

Psychologists have stressed on the significance of goals in the development and preservation of well-being of individuals (Oishi, 2000; Salmela-Aro, 2001), academic achievement and adjustment to college (Krisher, & Shechtman, 2015). Goal instability is defined as difficulty in the areas of self-direction, setting goals and upholding direction, maintaining the persistence to accomplish goals, and instigate action. Goal Stability is the ability to plan and have persistence in setting goals, attain goals and initiating actions (Robbins & Patton, 1985). Goal setting theory states that when an individual has commitment to goal and capability to attain goals, it leads to higher degree of task achievement, performance and career decision making abilities (Locke & Latham, 2006).

In the career research realm, literature reveals that goal instability has been used to scrutinize the topics connected to kinds of career decision makers in a sample of high school students (Multon, Heppner, & Lapan, 1995). Another study revealed that individuals with Higher goal instability are relatively less involved in

career explorative activities, also tend to have low career decision making self-efficacy (Bertoch, Lenz, Reardon, & Peterson, 2013; Blustein, 1989), have ambivalence for career selection (Chartrand, Robbins, Morrill, & Boggs, 1990) and are typically less satisfaction with their career choices (Robinson & Cooper, 1988).

Self-Efficacy is one's belief in his or her own abilities in order to perform and accomplish a specific task or goal (Ormrod, 2006). Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy spots out the degree of confidence held by the student regarding his or her own ability to engage in activities relevant to educational and work-related information collection, planning of goals, and decision making (Peterson, 1993). Betz & Taylor (2001) defined Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy as a competency where one can successfully accomplish tasks necessary to make vital career decision.

Social cognitive theory given by Bandura in 1986 states that a person's belief and self-reliance in their capability to carry out the assigned tasks and activities productively has a significant impact on the choices made by them, good functioning and perseverance in tasks completion. Therefore, low levels of self-efficacy expectations may bring about avoidance behavior, while high self-efficacy expectations may enhance approach behavior with regards to particular tasks or activities (Ormrod, 1996).

This notion of self-efficacy expectations recommends additionally that behaviors of the people can be forecasted by their beliefs they hold regarding their capabilities rather than by their actual potentialities (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996). The application of the self-efficacy construct to career research and activities was established by Betz and Hackett (1981) who recognized that college and university students' beliefs regarding their educational and career related abilities were notably linked to the wide-range of career options. They also established that higher levels of career decision-making self-efficacy leads to higher partaking in career decision-making activities as well as high degree of task performance and attainment, while lower levels of career decision-making self-efficacy leads to higher avoidance behavior for such activities. A study by Filippello, Sorrenti, Larcan, and Rizzo (2013) accounted that low academic achievement is connected with low self-esteem, poor decision-making self-efficacy and inappropriate decision-making styles. The students having higher academic achievement have higher self-esteem, superior quality of decision-making self-efficacy and healthy decision-making styles.

The current research would grow evidence regarding career decision making self-efficacy, goal stability and academic achievement. A present-day advantage of the research will be that it will open up new prospects for research in the area of career decision making self-efficacy as not much literature is available specifically about female students and within Pakistani context. It

will assist in understanding the concept of goal stability by comparing the cultural variability with the other societies available in literature and issues in Pakistan. The findings will generate evidence for the school administrators and policy makers to pay attention and create more awareness regarding career decision making self-efficacy among the students and faculty for betterment of society. The research will bring to light the importance of Career Education and significance of its implementation in the society. Teaching decision making in relationship to the world of work can be beneficial for the future of youth as well as for national interests.

## METHOD

### Objectives of the Study

Following are the objectives of the study:

- To study goal stability as a predictor of Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy.
- To study Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy as a predictor of academic achievement.
- To investigate the gender differences in Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy, goal stability and academic achievement of University Undergraduate students.

### Hypotheses

1. Goal stability predicts Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy among University Students.
2. Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy predicts Academic Achievement.
3. There is significant gender difference on Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy, goal stability and academic achievement of University Undergraduate students.

### Sample

For this study the population of interest was college and university students of enrolled in institutions of higher education. The sample used for this study consisted of 150 university/college students (n=75 Male and n=75 Female) enrolled in different colleges and universities located in Rawalpindi and Islamabad (IIUI, FAST, COMSATS, AMC, Tameer-e-millat University Shifa College of Medicine, Bahria University). The age range for the students was 18 – 26 years. Purposive sampling was used for the research.

### Instruments

The present study utilized following instruments for data collection.

#### 1. Demographic Data Sheet

A self developed demographic data sheet measuring variables like age, education level, gender, Field of Study/Faculty, Family income, Socio Economic Conditions, Cumulative college grade point average (was used for measuring academic achievement) was used in the study.

**2. Goal Instability Scale (GIS)**

It is a self-report 10-item scale arranged in a 6-point Likert-type format (1 = *Strongly Agree*, 6 = *Strongly Disagree*). Low scores is an indication of more goal instability whereas high scores indicate goal stability. The GIS has been found to have high stability with test-retest reliability to be .76 and internal consistency Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  to be .81 (Robbins & Patton, 1985).

**3. Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale Short Form (CDMSE)**

The CDMSE-short form assesses an individual’s belief about successful achievement of tasks necessarily required for making career decisions. It is comprised of 25 items arranged on a 5- point likert scale, ranging from 1 = no confidence at all to 5=much complete confidence. Higher scores indicate higher levels of career decision-making self-efficacy. Cronbach alpha reliability ranges from .92 to .97 (Betz & Taylor, 2001).

**Procedure**

The research questionnaires were given to 150 participants enrolled in different faculties of the university. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and consent for the participation in the study was taken prior to administration of the research questionnaires. The participation was voluntarily in nature. The participants were assured that their responses will be kept confidential and will be used only for research purpose. Participants were requested to watchfully indicate their true responses according to the available keys for each questionnaire. They were requested to first complete demographic information and then proceed to Goal Instability Scale and Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy Short Form. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analysis.

**RESULTS**

**Table 1: Reliability Analysis of Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy (CDMSE-SF) and Goal Instability Scale (GIS).**

| Scale    | Items | N   | M     | SD    | $\alpha$ | Range     |        | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|----------|-------|-----|-------|-------|----------|-----------|--------|----------|----------|
|          |       |     |       |       |          | Potential | Actual |          |          |
| CDMSE-SF | 25    | 150 | 90.71 | 16.77 | .79      | 26-130    | 51-155 | .37      | -1.23    |
| GIS      | 10    | 150 | 37.91 | 7.38  | .70      | 6-42      | 17-55  | -.27     | -.38     |

Note: CDMSE-SF=Career Decision making self-efficacy short form, GIS= Goal Instability Scale

Table 1 shows that Cronbach Alpha reliability for Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy-short form is 0.79 and for Goal Instability Scale is 0.70, which shows that the items have relatively high internal consistency and scales are suitable for sample analysis.

**Table: 2 Frequency and percentage of the sample regarding demographics.**

| Variable                   | f  | %    |
|----------------------------|----|------|
| <b>Age</b>                 |    |      |
| 18-21 years                | 54 | 72   |
| 22-26 years                | 21 | 28   |
| <b>Marital Status</b>      |    |      |
| Unmarried                  | 74 | 98.7 |
| Married                    | 1  | 1.3  |
| <b>Educational Status</b>  |    |      |
| 1-4 Semester               | 63 | 84   |
| 5-8 Semester               | 12 | 16   |
| <b>Faculties</b>           |    |      |
| Management Sciences        | 34 | 45.3 |
| Basic And Applied Sciences | 24 | 32.0 |
| Social Sciences            | 17 | 22.7 |
| <b>Family System</b>       |    |      |
| Joint Family System        | 21 | 27   |
| Nuclear Family System      | 54 | 72.3 |

The table 2 shows the demographic representation of the data.

**Table: 3** Linear Regression analysis showing the effect of goal stability on the prediction of Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy.

| Variable                            | B      | Model 95% CI |       |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------|-------|
|                                     |        | UL           | LL    |
| Constant                            | 72.105 | 58.19        | 86.01 |
| Goal Stability                      | .491   | .13          | .85   |
| R <sup>2</sup>                      | .04    |              |       |
| F                                   | 7.25** |              |       |
| Note: <i>df</i> =149, <i>p</i> <.01 |        |              |       |

The table reveals results computed by Linear Regression analysis which indicates that Goal stability is a significant predictor of Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy among university undergraduate students. Goal stability accounted for 4 % variance in the dependent

variable that is Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy ( $F(1,148) = 7.25, p < .01$ ) ( $\beta = .21, p < .01$ ). The results support the hypothesis "Goal stability predicts Career decision Making Self-Efficacy among University Undergraduate Students".

**Table 4:** Linear Regression analysis showing the effect of Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy in predicting Academic Achievement.

| Variable                            | B       | Model 95% CI |      |
|-------------------------------------|---------|--------------|------|
|                                     |         | UL           | LL   |
| Constant                            | 2.69    | 2.30         | 3.81 |
| Goal Stability                      | .007    | .003         | .012 |
| R <sup>2</sup>                      | .07     |              |      |
| F                                   | 12.16** |              |      |
| Note: <i>df</i> =149, <i>p</i> <.01 |         |              |      |

The table reveals the  $\Delta R^2$  value of .070 which indicates that 7 % variance in the dependent variable can be accounted for, by the predictor ( $F(1,148) = 12.16, p < .01$ ). Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy has

significant effect on academic achievement of university undergraduates students ( $\beta = .27, p < .001$ ). The results support the hypothesis "Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy predicts Academic Achievement".

**Table 5:** Mean Standard deviation and t-value for Career-decision-Making-Self-Efficacy and Goal Instability for Male and Female University Students.

| Scale                                | Gender                           |           |                                    |           | <i>t</i> (148) | 95% CI |      | Cohen's <i>d</i> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|--------|------|------------------|
|                                      | Male Students<br>( <i>n</i> =75) |           | Female Students<br>( <i>n</i> =75) |           |                | LL     | UL   |                  |
|                                      | <i>M</i>                         | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>                           | <i>SD</i> |                |        |      |                  |
| Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy | 91.06                            | 16.10     | 90.36                              | 17.51     | .79            | -4.77  | 6.13 | 0.04             |
| Goal Stability                       | 37.13                            | 7.57      | 38.69                              | 7.15      | .19            | -3.93  | 4.81 | 0.21             |
| Academic Achievement                 | 3.40                             | 0.48      | 3.32                               | 0.46      | 1.05           | -0.06  | 0.22 | 0.17             |

*df*=148

The table 5 reveals the t-test results computed to assess the gender differences in among university students regarding career decision making self efficacy and goal stability. The result no significant gender differences on both the variables. The result indicates an insignificant gender differences in the career decision making self efficacy in male students ( $M = 91.06, SD = 16.10$ ) and female students ( $M = 90.36, SD = 17.51$ ),  $t = .79, p = ns$ . The results also show an insignificant gender difference in goal stability among the male students ( $M = 37.13, SD = 7.57$ ) and female students ( $M = 38.69, SD = 7.15$ ),  $t = .19, p = ns$ . The results also show an insignificant gender difference in academic achievement among the male students ( $M = 3.40, SD = 0.48$ ) and female students ( $M = 3.32, SD = 0.46$ ),  $t = 1.05, p = ns$ .

## DISCUSSION

In this study we investigated the stability and change of health profession students' mastery and performance orientation over the undergraduate program and whether study GPA, self-efficacy and gender are associated with this process. It is important to gain knowledge on the stability and changes of goal orientations, since goal orientations are associated with various aspects of learning and behavior. Also, identifying constructs that are associated with fluctuations in goal orientations provide educators insight in how to strengthen their students' goal orientations and for example how to slow down possible declines of goal orientations over time.

The purpose of the present study was two-fold. First describe the demographics of the students and second to investigate goal stability as predictor for higher career decision making self-efficacy and to study career decision making self efficacy as predictor of academic achievement. Third to investigate the gender differences on the study variables.

The findings of the study indicated that goal stability has significant effect on Career decision making self-efficacy of university students. The findings are consistent with research literature (Flores & O'Brien, 2002; McWhirter, Rasheed, & Crothers, 2000; Rojewski, 2005). The study also found that Career decision Making self-efficacy has significant effect on academic achievement of university students. The findings are in line with other researches (Creed, Yin & Hood, 2009; Stacy, 2003).

In determining if there were any significant differences between male and female students some significant findings were apparent. Regarding the gender differences in among university students on career decision making self efficacy, goal stability, and academic achievement, the results showed no significant gender differences on career decision making self efficacy, goal stability and academic achievement among the students. The findings of other researches are supportive of the results of present study. Some researcher reported in their study that there is no difference on career decision making self-efficacy between male and female due to the reason that career has acquired value for both males and females (Chung, 2002; Fouad and Smith, 1997; Patel & O'Brien, 2005). Santos (2003) found in his study that there exists no gender difference on goal stability. Kets, Giebels, & Yang (2008) argue in their research that there are no differences among male and female regarding academic achievement and that both genders put in same efforts to achieve in their academic pursuits. The gender differences were investigated in the present study because socially it is believed a woman typically lacks the strong expectations of personal efficacy for many career-related barriers. Therefore the research was directed in investigating the career decision making self-efficacy, goal stability and academic achievement of university students. And the findings are supportive that there is no difference in male and females in the modern era where the sense of competition is high and both male and females have career orientation and plans.

### CONCLUSION

Career decision making self-efficacy and goal stability can be further developed in the students via professional career counseling that can enhance the academic achievement among the students.

### LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The sample was not large enough to assess the differences on some variables. The small sample size might have affected results, for example; results for gender differences may have reached a highly significant

statistical significance in a larger sample. The current study included students from different universities belonging to different faculties and semester. Therefore, nature of this study was limited. A more in-depth result could be conducted by classifying the different types of students.

The need to conduct research across all classifications of students and all types of institutions is a recommendation. Other students of interest might include samples of freshman, sophomores, seniors and juniors from different types of colleges and universities, like two-year or private institutions. Such procedures will allow for findings that can be generalized to all college and university students.

Further research is warranted on the relationship between, college major choice, Career related activities, and career decision-making self-efficacy to grow culture based evidence for Pakistani population. Therefore, additional study is warranted. It is also recommended to include some of other demographic characteristics such as parental occupation, parental education level and the exploration of goal instability and career decision making self-efficacy.

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