

## Significance of Perceived Social Support for Career Decision Self-Efficacy: A Co-relational Study

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### Abstract

**Background:** An individual's career competence depends profoundly on his career decision self-efficacy. In this regard, social support plays a substantial role during the process of career decision making for a person. Considering its impact on the decision making, the current study aimed at finding the relationship between Perceived Social Support (PSS) and Career Decision Self-efficacy (CDSE) among university students.

**Methods:** By using non probability sampling technique, 500 students (190 males, 310 females) were selected for their participation in this research. Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and Career Decision Self-efficacy scale were used for computing PSS and CDSE.

**Results:** Results showed that female students benefitted more from PSS in comparison to male respondents. However no significant gender differences were revealed regarding CDSE. Regression analysis was done to envisage the CDSS by PSS which revealed that PSS contributes to forecast up to 12% of the CDSE.

**Implications:** Current study will be advantageous for counselors and educationist by sensitizing them to consider the role of social support in career decision making among the individuals whom they deal with.

**Conclusions:** This study recommended that females possess more perceived social support as compared to males. It also found that there is positive association perceived social support and career decision self-efficacy among university students.

**Keywords:** Perceived social support, Parental support, Career decision self-efficacy, Career development, Career competence

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## Background

A person's career competence depends profoundly on his career decision self-efficacy which encompasses his confidence in taking decisions and making plans related to his education and occupational matters (Zhang et al., 2019). During the initial occupational stages, career development and identification are among the most significant aspects of psychosocial development (Baglama & Uzunboylu, 2017; Chavez, 2016). Similar to this, research has shown that the performance outcomes of the students in their field-related subjects can be predicted by their levels of self-efficacy (Betoret, Roselló & Artiga, 2017). So the adolescents and young adults having low career decision self-efficacy hold inadequate capacities to make or pursue their career decisions (Bercovitz, Benjamin, Asor, & Lev, 2012). On the other hand, students having high career decision self-efficacy appear more goal oriented, and spend an ample amount of time in exploring the career opportunities (Chiesa, Massei & Guglielmi, 2016). An individual's career selection, career development and job performance are positively correlated with career decision self-efficacy (Wang & Fu, 2015; Fatima & Khatoon, 2017). It is considered important for students to have firm belief in their career abilities and that they should be capable of adjusting in the transition phase of going from school to work (Wang & Fu, 2015). However, in the modern societies, career uncertainty has become a major issue to be addressed by professionals, educators and vocational psychologists (Gaffner & Hazler, 2002; Vignoli, 2009).

Various theoretical models propose that career development is not only an intrapersonal process but family context has a significant influence on an adolescent's career development (Ginevra, Nota & Ferrari, 2015). Researches have suggested that the family background is an important contingent factor that forms the study-to-work progression or the constructive phases of vocational improvement (Guan et al., 2016). Parental support provides resources necessary for the implementation of career process and offers confidence and motivation to individual's pursuing their career, thus increasing their self-efficacy (Guan et al, 2016; Metheny & McWhirter, 2013). Parents are the foremost source of social support, who have an influence on career self-efficacy, their outcome potentials and the development of their vocational plans, interests and goals (Ginevra et al., 2015). More specifically, secure attachment relationships with parents result in secure identity development which may contribute to career decision making (Mattanah, Lopez & Govern, 2011). Findings of a research (Guan et al., 2016) showed that perceived parental support can strengthen the career decision self-belief of the children and alleviate the career challenges faced by them. Moreover, Vignoli (2009) found a positive relationship between career consideration and reported self-esteem, by specifying that peer attachment may indirectly affect the career exploration process through self-esteem. Parents, significant others and care givers foster social skills of children which ensure their progress in academic and non-academic settings and help them in their career decision

making (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). Studies have also pointed out the manifestation of different features of family functioning on career decision making self-efficacy, such as parents' support (Lim & You, 2017), and parental role modeling (Garcia, Restu, Ocampo, Wang & Tang, 2019).

Gender differences may arise with reference to self-efficacy. Different researches have been conducted to investigate these differences. Findings of a recent study (Fatima & Khatoon, 2017) showed that males demonstrate a higher level of self-efficacy than females in self-efficacy scale. The research conducted by Sumari (2006) on gender comparison with respect to career decision self-efficacy showed that male students had greater career decision-making self-efficacy scores as compared to female students. These findings suggest that male students are more assertive to make career decisions than female students. While in the study conducted by Hyejin & Seung (2017), it has been found that females perceived more social support than males.

Due to lack of literature available on career decision self-efficacy, particularly in Pakistan, the present study intends to find the relationship between PSS and CDSE among post graduate students and undergraduate students of final year from different universities of Islamabad, Pakistan. This study would be beneficial to counselors as well as educationists to comprehend the role of perceived social support in career decision making self-efficacy.

## Method

### Objectives

Following were the objectives of the study.

1. To examine the relationship between perceived social support and career decision self-efficacy.
2. To explore gender differences with reference to study variables.

### Hypotheses

Following hypotheses were formulated for the present study.

1. Perceived social support will be positively correlated to career decision self-efficacy.
2. Females will have more perceived social support as compared to males.
3. Perceived social support will positively predict career decision self-efficacy of the sample.

### Design

This was the quantitative study. Purposive sampling technique was used based on cross-sectional design.

### Participants

Sample of the research consisted of 500 participants (190 males and 310 females). Participants from different private and government universities of Islamabad, Pakistan were included in this research. It was approached by using non-probability purposive sampling technique. The sample size was calculated using and consulting online sample size calculator Raosoft (Raosoft, 2004) by keeping 95% Confidence Interval and 5% chance of error. Care was taken to include the post graduate students, medical students and final year students of undergraduate.

## Measures

**Career Decision Self-Efficacy Short Form (Taylor & Betz, 1983).** The Career Decision Self-efficacy Short Form (CDSE) is a self-reporting scale consisting of twenty-five items. It is intensely allied with positive educational and vocation decisional consequences. It measures an individual's confidence related to career decision tasks (Taylor et al., 1983). The five competencies measured by CDSE are precise self-appraisal, assembly of occupational information, aim selection, planning for the future, and problem solving. Responses are implied on a five-point Likert scale as follows: No confidence at all=1, Very little confidence=2, Moderate confidence=3, Much confidence=4, Complete confidence=5. The scale is found reliable having Cronbach alpha value of .89. High scores indicate more career decisional self-efficacy.

**Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS).** MSPSS is a twelve-item self-administered scale, designed for subjective assessment of an individual's insight of sustenance from three bases: family, peers and significant others. Each dimension is assessed with four items. Responses are implied on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from very strongly disagree =1 to very strongly agree=7. The scale is found reliable having a Cronbach alpha value of 0.85.

## Procedure

Sample was selected on the basis of inclusion criteria, i.e. students from the age range of eighteen to twenty-five years (late adolescents and early adults) were included. Formal permission was acquired to access the participants. Research purpose was explained to the participants and their consent was obtained individually. Research instrument was distributed among the sample in the presence of the researcher and clear instructions were provided. Data was also collected via online from different engineering and medical related universities. They were given specific and clear instructions of inclusion criteria to fill the questionnaire. Any query raised by the respondents in person or via online was dealt with immediately. All the participants were assured regarding the confidentiality of the data they provided.

## Results

The present study intended to find the relationship between PSS and CDSE among post graduate students and undergraduate students of final year from different universities of Islamabad, Pakistan. Sample consisted of 310 (62%) females and 190 (38%) males. Participants belonged to different educational levels including students at bachelor's level, masters' level and medical students. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in the study to analyze results. Descriptive statistics, i.e. mean, standard deviation and reliability of both the scales, were calculated. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to find the correlation between MSPSS and CDSE. Mean, standard deviations and t-test were used to find differences across gender between MSPSS and CDSE.

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentages of the participants in correspondence to the demographic variables. Among the respondents 38% were males and 62% were females. Moreover, high proportion of participants were in the Bachelors qualification that is 63.8%, 21.4% were enrolled in MS and 14.8% were medical students. 68.8% of the participants were living in the Nuclear family system while 31.2% were living in a Joint family system.

Table 2 depicts the alpha coefficient and skewness of both the scales (MSPSS and CDSE) and their respective subscales, where MSPSS has  $\alpha = .85$  and CDSE has  $\alpha = .89$ .

Table 3 shows the relationship between two variables using Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient. A positive significant relationship  $r = .34^{**}$  was found between PSS and CDSE. It depicts that increase in perceived social support will increase the career decision self-efficacy.

Table 4 shows the comparison between females and males on the total of MSPSS and CDSS respectively. Females reflect higher mean  $M = 3.64^{***}$  as compared to males on MSPSS and this difference is statistically highly significant. On the other hand, females have slightly higher mean,  $M = 1.30$ , but this difference is non-significant.

Table 5 shows the regression analysis of the MPSS and CDSE. Analysis shows that the 12% variance in MSPSS is accompanied with variance in CDSE among the sample.

Table 1

*Demographic variables of the total sample (N=500)*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
Gender	Females	310 (62)
	Males	190 (38)
Qualification	BS	319 (63.8)
	MS	107(21.4)
	MBBS	74(14.8)
Marital Status	Single	419 (83.8)
	Married	28(5.6)
	Engaged	53(10.06)
Family system	Nuclear	344(68.8)
	Joint	156(31.2)

*Note. %=percentage*

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Coefficients of MSPSS and CDSE (N=500)*

Variables	No of items	M	SD	$\alpha$	Range		Skewness
					Actual	Potential	
Total MSPSS	12	62.99	12.06	.855	17-84	12-84	-.97
Significant others	4	5.2	1.36	.83	1-7	4-24	-.96
Family	4	5.35	1.28	.83	1-7	4-24	-1.003
Friends	4	5.19	1.37	.88	1-7	4-24	-.816
Total CDSE	25	87.01	13.94	.89	41-125	5-125	-.108
Self-appraisal	5	3.59	0.67	.65	1-5	5-25	-.25
Occupational information	5	3.53	.65	.63	1-5	5-25	.004
Goal selection	5	3.5	.64	.62	1-5	5-25	-.15
Planning	5	3.47	.715	.705	1-5	5-25	-.145
Problem solving	5	3.25	.708	.64	1-5	5-25	-.106

*Note:  $\alpha$ = alpha, CDSE=Career Decision self-efficacy, MSPSS=Multidimensional scale of Perceived Social Support. \* $p$ <.05, \*\* $p$ <.01*

Table 3

*Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of MSPSS and CDSE among university students (N=500)*

Variable	MSPSS
CDSE	.34**

*Note .CDSE=Career Decision Self-efficacy, MSPSS=Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, \*\*p<.01*

Table 4

*Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD) and t-values for MSPSS and Career Decision Self-efficacy among University Students (N=500)*

Variables	Female (N=310)		Male (N=190)		t (df)	p	95% CI		Cohen d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
MSPSS	64.51	11.82	60.51	12.06	3.64***(498)	.000	1.84	6.15	0.33
CDSE	87.64	13.83	85.97	14.11	1.30(498)	.19	-.851	4.19	

*Note. MSPSS=, CDSE=, t=t scores, df =degree of freedom, p = level of significance, CI=confidence interval, LL=lower limit and UL=upper, \*\*\*p<.001*

Table 5

*Regression analysis of the MSPSS and CDSE among University Students (N=500)*

Variables	B	$\beta$	Total CDSE	
			95% CI	
			LL	UL
Constant	61.98	.344**	55.85	68.11
MSPSS	.397		.302	.493
$\Delta R$		.344		
F		66.64		
R <sup>2</sup>		.12		

*Note. Constant=CDSS=, predictor=MSPSS=, LL=lower bound, UL=upper bound, \*\*p<.01*

## Discussion

The aim of this research was to explore the relationship between PSS and CDSE among university students of Islamabad, Pakistan. Gender comparison was also analyzed with reference to the study variables. MSPSS was used to assess perceived social support while CDSE was used to assess career decision self-efficacy. To explore the relationship between study variables, correlational research design was used. The Cronbach alpha of MSPSS and CDSS was .85 and .89 respectively.

The results of the present study show significant positive relationship between the PSS and CDSE( $r=.344^{**}$ ), thus which support the first hypothesis. These findings confirmed the previous research findings (Guan et al., 2016;

Metheny & McWhirter, 2013; Lim & You, 2017) that showed that the relationship of an individual with family members and their perceived social support helps individuals in their career decision making. Certainly, family members play a significant role in providing self-esteem, emotional network and informational support. Results of this study also support earlier findings (Guan et al, 2016; Metheny & McWhirter, 2013; Guan, Capezio, Restubog, Read, Lajom & Li, 2016; Mattanah, Lopez & Govern, 2011; Wolfe et al, 2004) which reveal that the secure parental connection (which is a significant social support) has a direct correlation with CDSE of emerging adults and their capability to select a career. Moreover, the findings illustrate that females show more perceived social support as compared to males thus supporting the second hypothesis. These findings are consistent with other research findings (Hyejin & Seung, 2017) which illustrate

that women were more likely to perceive family, spousal and friend support as compared to men. Furthermore, results of the present study showed non-significant difference across gender in terms of CDSE where males were found to have less career decision making self-efficacy than females, which is opposite to the previous research findings (Sumari, 2006) which showed males to have more career decision making self-efficacy than females.

Furthermore, predictive analysis in this research suggests that PSS make unique contribution to explain CDSE, where it accounts for prediction of CDSE up to 12% thereby accepting the third hypothesis of the current study. It suggests that the perception of children regarding social support contribute to their confidence in career decision self-efficacy up to 12%. Overall the findings of the current study signify that perceived social support is linked significantly and positively with CDSE as supported by the previous research findings (Guan et al, 2016; Metheny & McWhirter, 2013).

### **Limitations and Implications of the study**

The results of this study have implications for positive social modification not only at individual level but also at family level. The findings will help suggest parents to provide full support to their children needed to develop their strong personal beliefs which may be helpful in pursuing their career. The results of the study could be used to implement strategies aimed at improving the vocational decisions of university students. Also, the results from this study could be used by career development programs to promote planning and implementing career related tasks which aim at improving vocational decision making for adolescents. It is also helpful for the educationist and counselors in universities to target perceived social support of the students when assessing career decision self-efficacy. For the vocational psychologists who work to enhance self-efficacy expectations of clients experiencing career uncertainties and other career related difficulties, this study would be beneficial to provide respective strategies to resolve social support conflicts, if any, and then help them boost their confidence in selecting their profession.

The comparison of students with decided and undecided career path was not made because the group frequency of both groups was not comparable in the current study. This study also did not include the socioeconomic status of the participants which may have a direct effect on the career decision self-efficacy.

As observations and interviews could give more authentic and in depth information therefore in the present research, qualitative assessment could be done to gain more in-depth results especially with reference to perceived social support. Moreover, uneducated sample was not included in this research, therefore the results could not be generalized to a bigger population.

### **Conclusion**

The present study aimed at finding the relationship between PSS and CDSE among post graduate students and undergraduate students of final year from different universities of Islamabad, Pakistan. Findings revealed a positive correlation between both the study variables. It

showed that an increase in perceived social support resulted in an increase in career decision self-efficacy. Results showed that females possess more PSS as compared to males. No significant gender differences were revealed on CDSE. Regression analysis revealed that PSS contributes to forecast up to 12% of the CDSE. Current study will be advantageous for counselors and educationist by sensitizing them to consider the role of social support in career decision making among the individuals whom they are dealing with.

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### **Supplementary information**

#### **Abbreviations**

CDSE: Career Decision Self-efficacy

MSPSS: Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

### **Acknowledgment**

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### **Availability of data and materials**

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding authors on reasonable request.

### **Authors contributions**

Maheen Sohail contributed to the study concepts and design and acquisition of data, analysis, and interpretation of data. Dr. Saima Wasif and Ms. Maria Nawab participated in drafting the manuscript, critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content, and all authors have seen and approved the final version to be published.

### **Ethics approval and consent to participate**

This study was approved by the Department of Psychology, COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan. Written consent was obtained from all participants.

## Competing interests

The authors declare to have no competing interests.

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