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# CAREER DECISION MAKING DIFFICULTIES AND CAREER DECISION MAKING SELF-EFFICACY: UNDERSTANDING THE MODERATING EFFECT OF PERSONALITY

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## **ABSTRACT**

The role of personality type (A or B) in career decision making process is addressed seldom in existing literature. This paper investigates the moderating effect of personality type on the relationship between Career Decision Making Difficulties (CDMD) and Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy (CDMS). Quantitative inquiry of the research problem employed a field survey of 106 Management undergraduates representing Sri Lankan state universities. Instruments with greater measurement properties measured the key variables. Results of multiple regression analysis specify the significant interaction effect of personality type and CDMD ( $\beta = -0.046$ ,  $p = 0.041$ ). This implies personality types hold a moderating power which can lead to the variations in the Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy. Further, Type B personalities appear to be less self-efficacious than Type A personalities with respect to career decision making. Implications lead to the necessity of developing personalities to improve the self-efficacy of deciding on a future career.

**Keyword:** Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy, Personality, Career Decision Making Difficulty, Sri Lanka, Undergraduates

## **INTRODUCTION**

Career decision making is one of the most important processes of adolescence. In particular, career decision making status is considered one of the most salient constructs for career development and is observed lately with great interest. Defined by Career Decision Making Scale, career decision making status consists of two factors: career certainty and career indecision (Osipow, Clarke, Carney, Winer, Yanico, and Koschier 1976). While career certainty refers to certainty of the decision taken, career indecision provides information on specific issues that can impede findings on career certainty and its relatedness with other career constructs such as the structure of interests, academic stability, self-efficacy, contextual supports, etc. Several studies employ certainty of decision making for the assessment of career decision making status (Osipow, Clarke, Carney, Winer, Yanico, and Koschier 1976; Hartung 1995) while career indecisiveness is modestly addressed in the body of career choice knowledge until recent past. In recent years, given the rise in career mobility, career indecision has become an increasingly important construct in the field of vocational psychology (Kelly & Lee, 2002). But the personal attribute/s of the decision maker, to be specific, the “personality type” has hardly been investigated in connection with the career indecisiveness of adolescence. This

study in the context of undergraduates tests the moderating effect of personality type on to the relationship between Career Decision Making Difficulties (CDMD) and Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy (CDMS).

## ***THEORETICAL BACKGROUND***

The concept of career indecision usually includes the individual's difficulties in his/her effort to decisions. These difficulties are traced either before or during the decision-making process, are divided into cognitive or emotional difficulties and hinder the decision-making process (Osipow, Carney & Barak, 1976, Saka & Gati, 2007; Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou, 2010). Gati, Krausz & Osipow (1996) developed a taxonomy of difficulties in career decision-making. In this taxonomy, the difficulties were defined as deviations from an —ideal career decision-maker—a person who is aware of the need to make a career decision, willing to make such a decision and capable of making the decision —correctly. Any deviation from this model was considered as a potential difficulty that could affect the individual's decision-making process in one of two possible ways: (a) by preventing the individual from making a career decision or (b) by leading to a less optimal career decision. The taxonomy includes three major categories of difficulty: lack of readiness to engage in the career decision-making process, lack of information (about the self, about the steps involved in the process, about the various alternatives and the sources of additional information) and inconsistent information (unreliable information, internal and external conflicts).

Career decision-making is a complex process, by which the decision makers are required to process information about

themselves and information about the world of work (Jepsen, 1984). Difficulties in making decisions could occur if decision makers do not possess relevant information, have conflicting information, or do not know how to process the information (Gati, 1986). Difficulties could also arise when the psychological characteristics of the individual interfere with decision-making tasks (Crites, 1969). Many college students struggle with the decisions they have to make about a college major and school to work transition. The first step to assist these young people is to identify, define, and categorize the nature of their difficulties. Hence, empirical research examining the structure and dimension of career decision-making difficulties applicable to youngsters becomes important. Research on career decision-making problems has been largely focused on career indecision (see Slaney, 1988 for a review), and has been investigated without much effort toward integrating theories and empirical evidence (). The Career Decision-Making Difficulty Questionnaire (CDDQ; Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996) was created to address concerns related to a lack of theoretical focus and multidimensionality in the current instruments. Relying on decision theory, Gati et al. (1996) proposed a hierarchical classification system that assesses 10 difficulty areas in making career decisions which are organized into three major factors, namely (a) lack of readiness, (b) lack of information, and (c) inconsistent information. Lack of readiness is perceived as difficulties before the decision-making process and lack of information and inconsistent information are difficulties during the process.

According to Saka and Gati (2007), career indecision is also a major form of career decision-making difficulty. They defined career indecision to be the difficulties that individuals face while making career-related decisions.

Young people around the world, upon completion of their academic studies in a specific scientific field, find themselves in a difficult position, as they have to move to career decision-making. For many young people, career choice represents a difficult and complicated process that can detain a state of indecision with negative, long-termed consequences in their professional, personal and social life (Osipow, 1999). Recent studies revealed that a significant proportion of university students are undecided about their career paths (Lee, 2005) and that career indecision is related to various cognitive factors, such as career decision-making, self-efficacy (Creed & Patton, 2003), dysfunctional career thoughts (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon & Saunders, 1998), lack of information (Germeijs & De Boeck, 2003), internal -external conflicts (Thompson & Subich, 2006), self-knowledge (Gati & Saka, 2001) and one's previous working experience (Lent, Brown, Talleyrand, McPartland, Davis, Chopra et al., 2002).

### **Self-efficacy**

Bandura (1977) introduced the concept of self-efficacy with which he declared the individual's subjective judgment concerning his/her ability to succeed in an activity or to confront a situation. Therefore, self-efficacy does not refer to whether a person is objectively capable or not, but to his personal beliefs whether he has the necessary skills to do something, under various circumstances (Kantas & Hantzi, 1991). According to the theory, the subjective estimation of the person's skills plays a decisive role in his vocational behavior (Bandura, 1997). Research highlights the decisive effect of self-efficacy perceptions in career decision-making and in the articulated choices (Lent & Hackett, 1994). The higher the self-efficiency level people have concerning the fulfillment of their vocational roles, the higher interest

displayed for the certain choices and the greater their persistence in following their career goals (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001). Low perception of self-efficacy in the career decision-making blocks the individual from being engaged in possible career choices (Betz & Serling, 1995, cf Betz & Luzzo, 1996). According to other research, young people that feel capable of successfully passing the procedure of career decision-making perceive less personal or external obstacles in the aforementioned procedure (McWhirter, Rasheed & Crothers, 2000) and show certainty in career choices (Argyropoulou, Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou & Besevegis 2007; Betz, Klein & Taylor, 1996). Indeed, Betz and Vuyten (1997) defined self-efficacy, regarding career decision-making, as the most powerful forecasting factor for career indecision.

### **Personality**

Personality is the set of characteristics within an individual influencing his cognitions and behaviors in different contexts. Researchers have considered personality traits differently. Allport et al (1960) described different trait like central, secondary, common and cardinal traits while Cattell's (1966) research explored 16 primary and five secondary factors and Eysenck (1968) expressed that only three traits of extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism are enough to explain the personality of individuals (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1975). However, today Big Five of Goldberg (1992) is mostly accepted for the personality trait constructs which contain core dimensions of personality. Big five include openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (Costa and McCrae, 1985). Though, some personality researchers argue that this list major trait is not exhaustive but their criticism is not well established. Furthermore, clusters argued

by these researchers beyond five cannot easily be determined as personality construct (Saucier and Goldberg, 1998). Therefore, the researchers adopted Big Five as personality describing traits in present article.

Careers itself requires some kind of traits to be performed successfully (Gottfredson et al., 1975). Some career requires specific personality traits that related to attributes of on job requirements (Caldwell and Burger, 1998). Career success is highly dependent on the compatibility between personality of the incumbents and the job trait requirements (Judge et al., 1999) and for that reason the study argued that alignment or synergy of these traits in accordance with these careers (Witt et al., 2002) can produce optimal goals (Roberts and Robins, 2000) and results in daily life (Judge et al., 1999). Career counselling agenda that help self motives and personality desiring needs seem to enable incumbents to renew uniqueness required on career success patterns for own augmentation (Mcoetzee and Schreuder, 2002). Research suggests that there is a significant relationship between personality type and career choices but in practice wrong career choice are made due to the ignorance of specific personality type of the individuals (Hirschi et al., 2010; Onoyase and Onoyase, 2009). Personality is a complex area of human behavior where researchers are in the process of developing a commonly shared integrated perspective. Empirical findings indicate a variety of personality role in high education depending on how researchers measure personality; however, personality has firmly been recognized as one of significantly influential factors on professional decisions and expectation (Shuliang et al., 2019).

According to Osipow (1999), since Holland's theory assigns people to various personality types which correspond to career fields, it is conceivable that those

who belong to two or more types equally would be likely to be undecided about their careers. Such indecision would most likely result if the two types that the individual scored the highest on were in fields quite different from each other. For example, if a Realistic person scored equally high on the Social scale, a reasonable prediction is that since these two very different types do not lead to careers that would logically include characteristics of both or lead to job settings satisfying both types, the result would be indecision. It is also conceivable that a person with low scores on all of the types would not have interests sufficiently crystallized to permit a commitment to one field to be made. A third possibility is that a person with high scores in all fields would similarly have so many interests that a decision might be hard to make. Therefore, in addressing the challenges of people with multiple personalities, those who reflect minimal traits of all the personalities, and general difficulties encountered by people in making career decisions, career guidance becomes an issue of much essence (Otuei, 2017).

Therefore, this study aims to understand the moderating effect of personality with the relationship between CDMD and CDMS.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study performed a quantitative survey selecting random sample of 106 of level 4 undergraduates from a leading university in Sri Lanka. A self-structured questionnaire was developed where the instruments were adopted from The Big Five Inventory (BFI-10; Rammstedt, B. & John, O. P., 2007, Goldberg & Saucier, 1998), Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ; Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996) and Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMS-12; Betz, 1996). The responses

for CDMD and CDMS are ranked along a nine-point Likert scale, ranging from does not describe me to describe me well. The responses for Personality Types were ranked based on the scores of big five personality traits, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Accordingly Type A and Type B personalities were identified. The Multiple regression analysis was performed to analyse the data with the aid of SPSS version 21.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic results of the sample depicts that majority of the respondents were female (73%) and 64 % of students were identified as type A personalities. The Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the study.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Career Decision Making Self Efficacy	4.8396	1.40392	106
Career Decision Making Difficulties			
Lack of Readiness	5.1789	1.21949	106
Lack of Information	4.6413	1.75028	106
Inconsistent Information	4.8023	1.62034	106

Accordingly the mean value (4.8396) for CDMS indicates that the respondents are having moderate level of confidence regarding their career decisions. And the mean values for CDMD explains that the students are facing moderate level of CDMD.

Table 2. Correlation analysis

Correlations		
	Career Decision Making Self Efficacy	Significance
Pearson Correlation	Lack of Readiness	-0.759 0.000*
	Lack of Information	-0.944 0.000*
	Inconsistent Information	-0.925 0.000*

The results of correlation analysis recorded a statistically significant negative relationship between CDMD and CDMS.

Table 3. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	-.999 <sup>a</sup>	.997	.997	.07748	1.852

a. Predictors: (Constant), Interaction (ACDD \* PT), Lack of Readiness, Lack of Information, Inconsistent Information

b. Dependent Variable: Career Decision Making Self Efficacy

According to the above statistics the R2 value is .997 which concludes that the CDMD & interaction effect describe 99.7% of the CDMS's variability.

Table 4. Regression Coefficients

Model	Coefficients							
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta				Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.108	.034		-3.222	.002		
	Lack of Readiness	-.323	.008	-.281	-40.851	.000	.613	1.631
	Lack of Information	-.386	.008	-.481	-46.173	.000	.267	3.740
	Inconsistent Information	-.318	.009	-.367	-34.354	.000	.255	3.929
	Interaction (ACDD * PT)	.046	.023	.115	15.693	.041	.557	1.795

a. Dependent Variable: Career Decision Making Self Efficacy

The Table 4 results presents that the Interaction effect (CDMD \* Personality Type = .46) is statistically significant. Accordingly the Personality type moderates the relationship between CDMD and CDMS Stronger/ Positive personality types (Type A) lessen the negative effect of CDMD on CDMS.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study aims to identify the moderating effect of personality on the relationship between career decision making difficulties and career decision making self-efficacy. The results found that there is a strong negative relationship retains between CDMD & CDMS and this relationship is moderated by Personality Type. The strength of the relationship

appeared to be strengthened under Weak personalities (Type B) while it is lessened by Strong personalities (Type A). This can be attributed to the power of big five's to govern the difficulties posed by Lack of Readiness, Lack of information, and Inconsistent information impact the career uncertainty and indecisiveness. This concluded that the relationship between CDMD & CDMS is moderated by personality type.

The theoretical implication of the findings highlights the necessity of accounting the moderating effect of personality type while assessing the impact of CDMD and/or CDMS on other measures at individual level. The practical implication suggests firms/ education institutes to look in to the venues for strengthen the weak personalities so as to reap the complementary effect. Future studies would focus on the association between CDMD and CDMS from a broader perspective in the light of other individual and environmental dynamics.

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