THE CAREER READINESS CONSTRUCT BETWEEN DYSFUNCTIONAL CAREER THINKING AND CAREER SELF-EFFICACY AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Career readiness of the university students describe the preparations related to career planning, selecting and decision making. This research intended to identify the level of career readiness and to investigate the relationship between the variable of dysfunctional career thinking and career self-efficacy among undergraduate students. This study utilised the combination of descriptive and correlation research designs in order to understand the career readiness of the students. Sample selection was done by using the random cluster method on the population of students in a public university in Malaysia. A total of 260 samples of first degree university students were involved in this research. The research findings showed high level of dysfunctional career thinking at (83.8%) and low level at (16.2%). The career self-efficacy levels are at moderate (47.3%) and high (52.7%) level. The correlation analyses findings showed that significant strong negative relationship existed between the mean score of dysfunctional career thinking and mean score of career self-efficacy ($r = -.330$, $p < .05$). The research implications explain that the university students who have low and moderate level of career readiness need suitable intervention. Further research suggestions should focus on career interventions among students who have low and moderate career readiness. This is apart from using the variables of dysfunctional career thinking and career self-efficacy in order to measure the level of students' career readiness.

Keywords: Career readiness, Career self-efficacy, Dysfunctional career thinking, Undergraduate students.

1. Introduction

The career development of the students in this 21st century emphasizes the skills of technology in knowledge, skills and the ability of the graduates to fulfil the needs of job market [1]. The job market needs graduates who are competent and skills in their respective fields [2]. This determined that the graduates who fulfil the needs of the job market be measured to which extent the graduates are able to secure jobs after the completion of their studies. The benchmarking of the universities in producing competent and skilled graduates will influence the country's policies [3]. Based on the recent situations, it was admitted and validated that the graduates lack knowledge and skills needed by the job market [4].

The jobless graduates issue became a turning point for the universities and the industry players to find a solution mutually [5, 6]. Career readiness is measured based on the individual's ability to make career decisions that involves feeling, thinking, attitude, and expectation believes. Dysfunctional Career Thinking (DCT) refers to the thoughts of the individual that are dysfunctional and affects the problem solving and career decision making skills. Thus, by identifying the negative career thoughts, it can be helpful in planning suitable intervention strategies [7-9].

The concept of self-efficacy is defined when the individual able to consider their abilities in structuring and implementing desired action plans in order to achieve his/her aim [10]. Thus, dysfunctional career thinking and career self-efficacy become the elements that can measure the level of career readiness in the individual career development process.

2. Career Readiness

Career readiness, refers to the ability of the individual to make suitable career decisions by considering the factors that influence career development such as family, organization, social and economy [11]. Self-efficacy is described by social cognitive theory as the confidence of an individual towards the ability to structure and implement the needed cognitive, behavior, and social skills for the success of a task [12, 13]. Previous studies found that undergraduate students experience low and moderate level of career readiness [14, 15].

2.1. Dysfunctional career thinking

The Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) theory was based on the cognitive theory which are (i) problem solving and career decision making; (ii) understanding the positive and negative effects on the metacognitive in the context of problem solving and career decision making; and (iii) the basic concepts of interaction designs in order to increase skills in problem solving and career decision making. The basic assumptions of this theory have it that the career problem solving is a rational process in the context of social-emotion. Negative career thoughts are defined as the product of an individual's thinking regarding the assumptions, attitude, behavior, belief, emotion, planning, or strategies related to problem solving and career decision making [16].

The CIP theory develops the basis of dysfunctional career thinking which consists of knowledge, decision-making skill, and executive process. These three elements are able to define an individual's career readiness. The individuals

integrate the knowledge about oneself and knowledge about career in making career decisions [16]. Dysfunctional Career Thinking (DCT) describes three psychology sub constructs which are Decision Making Confusion (DMC), Commitment Anxiety (CA) and External Conflicts (EC). The DMC refers to an individual that is facing confusion with the issue of understanding decision making process due to negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and giving up. Negative emotions will influence the rational problem solving process and disturb the career decision making process. The CA refers to the inability of an individual to give commitment towards the chosen career choice. The EC refers to the inability of an individual to differentiate between own perception and the perception of others as an important input in the process of decision making. Past studies revealed that DCT has relationships with other variables such as difficulty in decision making [17].

2.2. Career self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as the ability of the individual to make assessments, structure and implement needed action plan in order to achieve the aim based on possessed skills. Self-efficacy plays a major role in individuals through believes to function, be motivated, levels of effectiveness and act based upon what they believe objectively and in reality by correcting their early perceptions supported by existing knowledge and skills. High self-efficacy describes individuals with confidence in completing career tasks and tendency to make career explorations. The application of SCCT theory in the aspect of career started early 1994 [18]. The assumption of this theory is that individuals make career decisions influenced by experience and environment. This theory combines self-efficacy believes, expectation of effect and goal as well as learning factors in order to explain academic achievement and career selections of an individual [19]. According to this theory, personal career is influenced by four crucial elements which are behaviour, self-efficacy believes, expectation of effect and aim.

In the context of this research, the career self-efficacy of the university students are related to their ability, confidence and believes regarding career planning including career selection, career decision making and responsibility towards made decision. Related studies showed that career self-efficacy is crucial towards the career development of an individual. Thus, the aims of this study were: (i) to identify the level of career readiness among university students and (ii) to measure the relationship between the variables of dysfunctional career thinking and career self-efficacy.

3. Research Methodology

This research utilised the descriptive and correlation research design. The description method intended to obtain min score, standard deviation and the level of dysfunctional career thinking and career self-efficacy. The correlation design intended to identify the relationship between the variables of dysfunctional career thinking and career self-efficacy. The research samples was 240 final year undergraduate students in a public university. This study used the Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI) and the Career Decision Self-efficacy – Short Form (CDSE-SF) inventory was used. The data were analysed descriptively to identify normality of samples, mean, standard deviation and level of studied variables.

Apart from that, Pearson correlation statistic was used to determine the relationship between studied variables.

Instruments

Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI): CTI was developed by Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon and Saunders in the year of 1996 based on the Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) theory [11]. CTI consists of 48 items that measure Dysfunctional Career Thinking (DCT), sub scales Decision Making Confusion (DMC), Commitment Anxiety (CA), and External Conflict (EC). Measurement of Likert scale used is 4- point scale with, 0 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 1 = Disagree (D), 2 = Agree (A), 3 = Strongly Agree (SA). The reliability test of CTI was carried out on norm groups such as adults, college students, high school students and clients (19). The internal validity test showed Alpha Cronbach value for total score to be between .93 and .97. As for the DMC sub construct the value was between .93 and .94, CA was between.79 and .91 and EC was between .74 and 81. Additionally, pilot test was done on university student population using Malay version and found that reliability of CTI was .946, sub scale DMC (.874), sub scale CA (.840) and sub scale EC (.623) [20].

Career Decision Self-efficacy-Short Form (CDSE-SF). This questionnaire consisted of 25 items that were modified from 50 original items and measures the self-efficacy sub constructs including self-knowledge, career information, selection aim, planning and problem solving. Scoring of CDSE-SF uses 5-point Likert scale where each item is presented with five scale dimensions, which are (1) - (Strongly Not Confident) to (5) - (Strongly Confident). The interpretation mean score were 1.00 to 2.33 (Low), 2.34 to 3.66 (Moderate), and 3.67 to 5.00 (High) (31, 32, 33). Taylor and Betz, [21] reported reliability value obtained for overall Alpha Cronbach score to be .96 while Alpha Cronbach value for five sub scales were in between .86 to .89. However, Luzzo [22] did test and retest within a duration of 6 weeks and found the coefficient score to be .83. Furthermore, pilot test using the Malay version of CDSE-SF was done on first degree student population and found the reliability coefficient value of career self-efficacy to be .911 [20].

4. Results

The research findings are categorised into two parts. The first part consists of descriptive analyses findings related to level of career readiness while the second part consists of inferential analysis findings related to relationship between dysfunctional career thinking and career self-efficacy.

4.1. The level of dysfunctional career thinking and career self-efficacy

This summarizes the descriptive analyses findings for the total research samples that involved 260 samples with 120 samples representing social science stream and 140 samples representing science stream. The descriptive analyses findings of samples of both social and science stream for DCT (M = 64.78, SD = 18.50); sub scale DMC (M = 16.08, SD = 6.70), sub scale CA (M = 14.02, SD = 4.16); and sub scale EC (M = 6.91, SD = 2.47). Apart from this, further analyses showed that the variable of DCT (low 16.2%, high 83.8%), sub scale DMC (low 25.8%, high 74.2%), sub scale CA (low 44.6%, high 55%), and sub scale EC (low 8.1%, high 91.9%). These showed that the students have high dysfunctional career thinking.

Table 1, shows the descriptive analyses findings for the CSE variable (moderate 47.3%, high 52.7); sub scale SK (low 0.77%%, moderate 60.38%, high 38.85%), sub scale CI (moderate 40%, high 60%); sub scale SA (moderate 41.9%, high 58.08%); sub scale CP (moderate 49.62%, high 50.38%); and sub scale PS (low 0.38%, moderate 54.62%, high 45%). These findings showed that the students have moderate and high career self-efficacy.

Table 1. Score distribution of career self-efficacy variable.

Category	CSE	SK	CI	SA	CP	PS
Mean	92.16	17.70	18.97	18.85	18.59	18.05
SD	11.46	2.59	2.63	2.52	2.70	2.65
Low (%)	-	0.77	-	-	-	0.38
Moderate(%)	47.3	60.38	40	41.92	49.62	54.62
High (%)	52.7	38.85	60	58.08	50.38	45

N = 260, (CSE = Career Self-efficacy, SK= Self Knowledge, CI = Career Information, SA = Selection Aim, CP = Career Planning, PS = Problem Solving)

4.2. No significant relationships between the variables of DCT, DMC, CA and EC with CSE.

The normality test analyses of DCT variable for total sample of (n=260) showed Kolmogorov-Smirnov p = .057, and CSE p = .200. The result showed that the data for both DCT and CSE variables are normally distributed and can be accepted for Pearson correlation analyses. Table 2 shows that there are moderate negative relationships between the mean of CSE and DCT [r = -.330, p < .05], with DMC [r = -.365, p < .05], with CA [r = -.254, p < .05]. The relationship between CSE and EC is low and insignificant [r = -.114, p > .05. The results showed that the variables of DCT, DMC, CA and EC have negative relationships with CSE. These can be used to conclude that the students with high dysfunctional career thinking have low career self-efficacy.

Table 2. Mean, standard deviation and correlation.

Characteristics	1	2	3	4	5
1. DCT	-				
2. DMC	.928**	-			
3. CA	.845**	.703**	-		
4. EC	.732**	.593**	.532**	-	
5. CSE	-.330**	-.365**	-.254**	-.114	-
M	64.78	16.08	14.02	6.92	92.16
SD	18.50	6.70	4.16	2.47	11.46
Alpha	.940	.919	.891	.728	.682

(DCT = Dysfunctional Career Thinking, DMC = Decision Making Confusion, CA = Commitment Anxiety, EC = External Conflict) (*p < .05, **p < .01)

5. Discussions and Suggestions

The findings of this research explained that majority of the research subjects had high dysfunctional career thinking. High level refers to negative career thoughts which pose as obstacles towards an individual's ability to make career decisions. This finding supports the findings of previous studies that described negative career

thinking obstruct individuals from making career decisions because it influences their self-confidence. The research findings also showed that the research subjects have moderate level of career self-efficacy at 47%. Career self-efficacy is the confidence of individuals in their ability to make career decisions including self-knowledge, career information, selection aim, planning and problem solving.

There are significant negative strong relationships between dysfunctional career thinking and career self-efficacy. This showed that negative career thoughts affected the confidence of individuals in making career decisions. Past studies also proved that the variables of dysfunctional career thinking and career self-efficacy are related and have strong relationship in the context of career development. Low career self-efficacy causes an individual to avoid involvement in activities that demands career decision making, while individuals who do not make decisions or confused in making career decisions are influence by dysfunctional career thinking or negative career thoughts. Those who face this situation do not have the confidence and believe that they can successfully complete any career activities as a result, they may not be able to make career decisions, make poor decisions or not sure in making career decisions.

From the discussions, the dysfunctional career thinking and career self-efficacy are two major constructs that can measure career readiness level in the process of individual career development and these elements can be learned and enhanced through systematic methods. Individuals with high career self-efficacy has the tendency to make positive decisions. Otherwise, those with low career self-efficacy face difficulties in making career decisions and will avoid involvement in career decision making activities because they feel they do not have the ability or the self-confidence and this results in increase pressure and anxiety. These findings support previous studies that explain the negative career thinking as a barrier to make a career decision making [20].

This research also implicate that the career counselling should using the test of CTI and CDSE-SF in understanding their clients, build profiles and identify needs for suitable career interventions for university students in local context. In addition to this study, it is possible to explore SCCT and CIP theory in designing a career intervention program. Apart from that, past studies that used the CIP theory specifically by applying the workbook and pyramid application CIP [23] able to explain about dysfunctional career thinking that can be improved through suitable interventions [24]. Further research needs to be done by exploring CIP and SCCT theories by applying suitable interventions in order to help university students face the issue of career readiness.

6. Conclusion

The present study found that high career decision self-efficacy has make a positive decisions to help students more confidence to make a career choices. Hence, career counsellors are suggested to assist the people in need by enhancing their career decision self-efficacy, which can be more effective in reducing career indecision. The formation of self-efficacy is rooted in four reference points: performance accomplishment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. These four reference points may act as a guidepost for counsellors conducting career counselling session and also career intervention programs. Career readiness of university students are influenced by rational process of experiences and

learning. By understanding the variables of career readiness, individuals can be guided to identify career problems, inability to make decisions, decision making confusion, commitment anxiety and external conflicts. This problem can be solved through systematic career interventions such as counselling, guidance, consultation, mentoring or others.

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