

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A Study of the Career Aspirations Among College Students with Their Self-Regulated Learning and Career-Decision Self-Efficacy



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Name of the Student: Priya Jaiswal

Roll No.: PM17005

Name of Department: Management Studies

Degree for which Submitted: Doctor of Philosophy

Dr. Jaya Srivastava

Dr. Rohit Bansal

(NAME OF THE SUPERVISOR)

(NAME OF THE CO-SUPERVISOR)

Abstract

India, the emerging economy, has a remarkable diversity and complexity across its landscape, population, and culture. Understanding and recognizing the career aspirations of its young population will not only help in their human capital development, but will also help to understand their academic choice, performances, and all career-related decisions. Upon analyzing the current literature, it has been discovered that India must prioritize its youth's professional goals when addressing jobless growth to achieve a high growth rate. A noteworthy percentage of the young generation in India continues in education to a degree level, but their early success does not translate into similar advantages in terms of career attainment. India has a unique situation with a low credible vocational framework and supply-side constraints. Indeed, the challenges will stem from our demographic dividend, low adaptive skills, and increased involvement in the labour force. So, it is important to upskill these young people in the current economic space, considering their career aspirations, to facilitate better employment opportunities. The country needs to harness the potential and develop every unit of its human capital for sustainable growth. It is important to consider career aspirations for effective career guidance and counselling, resource planning, and infrastructure development.

Education is a critical factor that plays a central role in innovation and human capital development. The key factor in career development involves an individual's career aspirations and others being their learning. Student's career aspirations are strongly tied to their learning achievements, and as such, they exert a powerful influence on the strategies for learning. In the rapidly evolving landscape of the 21st century, students face dynamic challenges in education and career development. The need for lifelong learning, as also specified in SDG-4, and adaptability have become increasingly evident, making the connection between educational experiences and career aspirations more complex and critical than ever before. Central to this relationship is the concept of self-regulated learning, which encompasses a set of skills and strategies that enable individuals to take control of their learning processes and foster independence in educational and professional pursuits. Proactive self-regulated learners involve using goal setting, memory strategy, self-evaluation, seeking assistance, environmental structuring, learning responsibility, and organizing to monitor their behaviour and motivation to accelerate the process of effective learning. By executing these strategies, individuals experience a sense of mastery, perfection, and accomplishment that boosts their confidence and self-efficacy beliefs in career-related tasks, referred to as career decision-self-efficacy and their pursuit. Thus, practising self-regulated learning and utilizing its strategies

is expected to unveil a high level of career decision self-efficacy, induce better expectations, and choose higher goals, leading to more ambitious and focused career aspirations.

The dynamic and rapidly changing world of work demands that academic learning should be outcome-based and recommends restructuring the learning process in India to provide students with the attainment of their desired career goal at the end of their academic experiences. In the same vein, it is suggested to concentrate on self-regulation of behaviour to take care of suboptimal skills in students. Therefore, the present study explores the intricate relationship between self-regulated learning and career aspirations, focusing on the role of career decision self-efficacy. It is grounded in the premise that the interplay of these constructs significantly influences student's capacity to set and achieve career-related goals and navigate the complexities of modern career development. A dynamic career development process seeks a person who can adapt quickly and learn autonomously, these people are good at self-direction and able to synthesize maximum out of minimum. The action-oriented social cognitive career theory emphasizes the importance of self-regulation in career development and highlights the necessity for adaptive behaviour and management of self-regulation in this context. The theory emphasizes the power of cognitive ability (self-efficacy) and seeks to explain interrelated aspects of career adaptive behaviour of self-regulation for career aspiration formation and further dealing with challenges and career management.

With the impact of globalization and the changing nature of work driven by the technological revolution, and cultural and competitive changes across the globe, career development emphasizes the person's adaptable and self-regulated skills. The youth need to be prepared, in terms of skills attainment and level of ambition and aspirations to thrive in the changing scenario. For continued growth and development and the changing face of the world of work, self-regulated learning, which involves various strategies, has emerged as a stable option due to its flexibility, multi-modal approach, and success-oriented format. Thus, considering gaps and the need for high self-regulation and high career decision self-efficacy, and the demand for restructuring of the learning system that should be outcome-focused, a conceptual model was developed comprising self-regulated learning, with its seven strategies influencing career aspirations of the students directly and via their career decision self-efficacy. With the underlying objectives, the study aims to contribute to the broader conversation about the interconnectedness of learning, career development, and personal agency.

The objectives of this research are three-fold:

- a) To empirically investigate and understand inter-construct relationships,
- b) To identify which of the learning strategies predicts the career aspirations of the students
- c) Investigating how self-regulated learning influences career decision-self-efficacy further mediates the relationship between career aspirations and self-regulated learning.

Using an adapted survey instrument consisting of 40 indicator items to measure these constructs, data was collected from 504 students from diverse academic backgrounds from the state of Uttar Pradesh, who gave their consent and completed the form. Subsequently, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied for the analysis, and Smartpls version 4.0 was used. The result revealed that self-regulated learning and career decision self-efficacy strongly and positively influence student's career aspirations. The strategy of seeking assistance, self-evaluation, memory strategy, environmental structuring, and organizing strategy predicts students' career aspirations, whereas goal setting and bearing the learning responsibility fails to affect their career aspirations.

The data analysis results have three key implications for the stakeholders: educationalists, institutions, and students. One, the study establishes the prominent role of a self-regulated learning approach in triggering career aspirations and further developing skills and competencies among learners. Two, career-decision self-efficacy mediating the linkage between self-regulated learning and career aspirations must be consciously integrated into the learning design to sustain the triggering effect. Three, the inherent relationship between education and career, the study encourages exploring, elaborating, and integrating self-regulated learning strategies in the academic domain. The systematic usage of self-regulated learning in such a domain can be very effective in fostering competencies, student motivation, and achievement of learning and career outcomes. The study offers a high predictive relevance, assuring its practical significance and suggesting that the relationships specified in the study reflect the underlying data and are more likely to generalize well to the new data set.

Keywords – Career development; Career aspirations; Self-regulated learning; Career-decision self-efficacy