

Effect of Academic Stress and Career Choice on Career Anxiety in University Students

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Abstract

Purpose of the study was to determine the effect of academic stress and career choice on career anxiety in university students. Professional degree students were the population of the study at the University of Sargodha. The sample was taken from eight Faculties of the University of Sargodha i.e., the Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Medical and Health Science, Faculty of Sciences, Faculty of Art and Humanities, Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Engineering and Technology, Faculty of Computing Science and College of Pharmacy were selected conveniently. The sample comprised 427 students from regular and self-support programmes of the above-mentioned department; BS (final semester students) and Sargodha Medical College (3rd year). Quantitative data was collected physically. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and linear regression were used to analyze data. The study findings concluded significant effect of academic stress and career choice on career anxiety. This research can be further conducted at other universities, focusing on gender differences.

Keywords: Career Choice, Career Anxiety, Academic stress

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Introduction

The word career has been derived from the Latin word “carrus” which means ‘wheeled vehicle’. The 21st century has made choosing a career more challenging, which has a big impact on how people make decisions. The most significant life event is choosing a career. The choice of a job affects not just one's way of life but also the physical and mental health of an individual and their family. The appropriate career decision is crucial for students beginning their professional education since it will have a significant influence on their professional lives and future success. According to Ahmad, Sharif, and Ahmad (2017). According to Humayon and Raza et al. (2018), career choice is the process of choosing a course of study that leads to a particular job based on one's interests, passions, and abilities as impacted by elements including parental considerations, peer pressure, and role models. Career anxiety refers to unfavorable feelings felt when making career decisions and while performing job duties (Boo, et al., 2022). A bad emotional condition brought on by an unknowable threat is known as anxiety. Career anxiety is a negative worry that is characterized by emotions of fear and anxiety about the future and what may go wrong for the individual (Priastanti & Pratitis, 2021). According to Hackett &

Byars (1996), career anxiety is "a negative emotional state that is associated with concerns about one's abilities, the expectations of others, and the consequences of falling short of those expectations." According to Pyle and Harris (2008), professional anxiety can have a detrimental effect on students' academic achievement, well-being, and career growth. Academic stress was first defined by Verma and Gupta (1990) as mental distress related to frustration associated with academic failure, anticipation of the future, or an awareness of the possibility of failure. Academic stress occurs when students perceive their inability to achieve the academic demands and tasks from all quarters (Abdollahi et al., 2020). Academic pressures, such as those from peers, school, the neighborhood or homes, are mostly sourced from the child's surroundings. The child's emotional anguish is a result of these academic pressures (Qayyum & Maqsood et al., 2022). Academic stress from high expectations and workload can lead to anxiety about future careers. Similarly, the pressure of making the right career choice without adequate guidance exacerbates this anxiety. Addressing these interconnected issues through counseling, career guidance, and stress management is crucial for fostering students' well-being and ensuring their successful transition into the workforce.

Objectives

The objective of this research study is;

1. To find out the effect of career choice on career anxiety of university students
2. To determine the effect of career choice on academic stress of university students.
3. To find out the effect of academic stress on career anxiety of university students

Operational Definitions

Career choice: A career choice entails a wide range of choices for lifetime careers. Career choice means deciding on the job you want to do

Career anxiety: Career anxiety refers to emotional distress or worry about a job or future work

Academic stress: Academic stress means feeling stressed out about extra pressure and worry about studies.

Literature Review

This literature review includes academic stress and career choice and career anxiety of university students. The selection of a career is very important for any individual. The careers of bankers, university teachers, doctors, and engineers depend on specific types and levels of education. Career selection is the process of choosing a profession or occupation that leads to future life (Zaidi and Iqbal, 2012). Seligman (1980) defined a career as a sequence of roles or positions including work, leisure, and educational pursuit which may encompass several occupations, vocations, or jobs a person engages in during his work life. Career choice is a development process that spans one's life. It transcends just choosing a job for immediate satisfaction and entails a serious consideration of a job and its implication for later satisfaction and personal adjustments (Alliyu, 1995). The SCCT model presupposes that when a person believes they are proficient in the necessary abilities for a certain employment, they will be very

interested in that occupation. Interest will shape the person's professional objectives for choosing that vocation. These objectives lead people to choose a career. This theory's two contextual effects that have an impact on these elements' interactions have been found. According to Savickar, (2005) Career Construction Theory (CCT): "Career choice is a process of constructing a life story that integrates one's past, present, and future occupational experiences into a coherent narrative that provides a sense of direction and purpose for one's career". According to Deci, & Ryan, (2000) Self- Determination Theory (SDT): "Career choice is a self-determined process that involves the satisfaction of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness and that influenced by social and culture factors in the environment". According to social learning theory (SLT) was developed by a group of American researchers (2014), four factors influence career decision-making. These are genetic endowment, environmental conditions, learning experiences, and task-approach skills.

Models of career choice decisions are different approaches that tell us how and under what circumstances the career choice decisions are made. They have been briefly discussed in the following lines as background information for the study. Payne (2003) assumed that while making career choice decisions individuals follow one of the five approaches or models, i.e. (1) Economic (2) Structuralism (3) Pragmatic rationality (4) Choice and decision-making in education (5) Decision-making behavior. This section is drawn from past research, practice, and studies to develop a more comprehensive understanding of students' decision-making as a ground for developing and improving career choices as well as students' decision-making. There are the following factors that influence the family environment, learning environment, information collection (information network), technological environment career choice decision, etc.

According to Racham (2013), anxiety is characterized as a bad emotional state brought on by an unclear danger. Nowadays, one of the top worries individuals have is living a good life in the future, which mostly depends on locating a respectable employment that satisfies both their demands for money and respect. Anxiety that stems from worries and fears about one's profession or workplace is known as career anxiety. It comprises a variety of feelings, such as anxiety, fear of failing, and ambiguity regarding one's job options and advancement. Career anxiety can have negative effects on a person's personal and professional lives. According to research (Akhtar et al., 2018). This theoretical framework highlights the role of person-environment fit in influencing career anxiety. Social Cognitive Career Theory proposes that career anxiety is influenced by self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations. Individuals with low self-efficacy, or a lack of confidence in their abilities to succeed in their chosen career, are more likely to experience career anxiety (Lent et al., 1994). Cognitive information processing (CIP) theory (Sampson et al., 2004) posits that internal factors, such as commitment anxiety and career tension, can make a student's career problem-solving process more difficult and warrant the attention of career practitioners. Understanding the factors that contribute to career anxiety is crucial for developing interventions and strategies to support individuals in managing and reducing career anxiety. Here are some factors that can affect career anxiety, such as personal skills, irrational beliefs about employment, employment environment, and professional education training.

Academic stress is a prevalent issue among students and has been the focus of extensive research. Academic stress includes a high workload, time pressure, academic expectations, and competition (Misra & Mckean, 2000). Moreover, academic stress can negatively impact students' cognitive functioning, attention, and memory (El Ansari et al., 2011). Moreover, Academic stress is common among general college student samples, with the greatest sources of academic stress observed in exam participation (study and completion), grade competition, and the perceived disproportion of little time and extensive course content (Kohn and Frazer, 1986; Abouserie, 1994). Academic stress factors can significantly impact academic stress levels. Sleep deprivation has been associated with higher levels of stress among college students (Gaultney, 2010). Inadequate nutrition, including a lack of balanced meals and skipping meals, can contribute to increased stress levels (El Ansari et al., 2014) found that poor dietary habits were associated with higher stress levels among university students. Research by Salmon, et.al, (2019) suggests that sedentary behavior is associated with increased stress levels and reduced well-being in university students. The pressure to achieve high standards and perfectionism can contribute to increased stress level among undergraduate students (Stoeber & Otto, 2006).

Methodology

All the professional degree students from University of Sargodha were selected as the population for this research. The sample was taken from seven Faculties of University of Sargodha i.e. Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Medical and Health Science, Faculty of Sciences, Faculty of Art and Humanities, Faculty of Social sciences, Faculty of Engineering and Technology, College of Pharmacy. Further from Faculty of Agriculture (Department of Plant Pathology), Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences (Sargodha Medical College), Faculty of Sciences (Food Science and Biotechnology, Program IT And CS), Faculty of Art and Humanities(Department of Law), Faculty of Social Sciences (Department of Malik Faroz Khan Noon Business School/ Institute of Education), Faculty of Engineering and Technology (Program Civil Engineering), and Faculty of Pharmacy (Program of Pharma-D) were selected multi stage-conveniently. The sample comprised of 427 students from regular and self-support programmes of above-mentioned departments; BS (final semesters student) and Sargodha Medical College (3rd year). Quantitative data was collected physically survey. In this study, three adapted scales (Career choice tool student decision-making questionnaire (ÖZLEN & ARNAUT, 2013), career anxiety tool career anxiety scale (CAS), and academic stress of the student stress inventory (ISS) scale adopted by Shah, (2018) were used. Pilot testing was conducted by using data from 50 students. After pilot testing the reliability of the instrument was calculated and the value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.842.

Data Analysis

	Descriptive Analysis					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
CC	427	1.16	5.00	3.4558	.65840	Medium
CA	427	1.24	3.94	2.3748	.46700	Medium
AS	427	1.08	4.00	2.5145	.56221	Medium

In descriptive analysis to measure the effect of academic stress and career choice on career anxiety in university students. percentages, mean values and standard deviation were calculated. The mean value is divided into 'Low', Medium, and 'High' (Salikin, et.al, 2014). Mean values have been categorized into three levels (ranges) i.e. Low (1.00-2.33), Medium (2.34-3.66), and High (3.67-5.00). So above table show that the perceptions of professional degree students about career choice, career anxiety and academic stress were medium level.

Person correlation analysis are used as a statistically tool to found the relationship between career choice and career anxiety in university students were found significant. The value of person correlation coefficient was ($r = .219$ $P = .00$). It means there is significant relationship found between career choice and career anxiety of respondents. The person correlation between career choice and academic stress of respondents as ($r = .18$, $P = .00$). It means there is significant relationship between career choice and academic stress of respondents. The person correlation has a significant relationship between academic stress and career anxiety of respondents as ($r = .275$, $P = .00$).

Linear regression analyses are used as a statistically tool to found the effects of independent variable on dependent variable (Xiang, 2020). The linear regression between the effects of career choice on career anxiety. The value of R^2 is .048, $\beta = .155$, $\beta = .219$ with significant value .00. So linear regression between the effects of career choice on career anxiety statistical significance. The linear regression between the effects of career choice on academic stress. The value of R^2 is .035, $\beta = .160$, $\beta = .188$ with significant value .00. So linear regression between the effect of career choice on academic stress statistical significant. Linear regression between the effects of academic stress on career anxiety. The value of R^2 is .076, $\beta = .228$, $\beta = .275$ with significant value .00. So linear regression between the effect of academic stress on career anxiety statistical significant.

Conclusion

Results of data revealed that data was normally distributed. The study's result showed that there is significant relationship between career choice and career anxiety. Result of the study showed significance relationship between career choice and academic stress. Result showed the significant relationship between academic stress and career anxiety. Result presented that there was significant effect of career choice on career anxiety. Outcome presented weak significant effect of career choice on academic stress. Result presented significant effect of academic stress on career anxiety.

Discussion

The results revealed that the effect of career choice on career anxiety of university students significant. Literature on career choice reveals that several scholars have examined the relationship of career anxiety with numerous others variables and most of the findings are formed in line with the finding of the present study. The study of Boo et al., (2022) contradicts the finding of this study to examine the relationship among undergraduate students' career anxiety, choice goals, and academic performance. The results of the study revealed that participants showed an academic stress and career anxiety have opposite relationships, meaning

that students' increasing worry about their career affects their academic performance. Career anxiety is also negatively related to choose goals. The study carried out by Kautish et al., (2021) contradicts the finding of this study to examine the empirical study from india on the moderating effect of social support on career anxiety and career commitment. The study showed that only students with little to in social support had a significant negative link between anxiety and commitment, as seen by the moderating effect of social support. In both studies the possible reason might be due to the use of different approaches and instruments for assessing career choice or career anxiety. The regression analysis of career choice of university students carries a significant relationship to academic stress. The study carried out by Shukla & Joshl, (2017), examined the stress related to academics for both professional and non-professional students. As the mean scores of non-professional students were much higher hand those of professional students, the results indicated a considerable differences in the areas of academics, families, finances, and general stress. The finding of similar performed research by Shukla & Joshl, (2017) supports the finding of this study because they reported that academic stress was positively related to career choice. The regression analysis of academic stress of university students carries a significant relationship to career anxiety. Literature academic stress reveals that several scholars have examined the relationship of career anxiety with numerous other variables and most of the findings are formed in line with the finding of the present study. The finding of similar study conducted by Qayyum et al., (2022), contradicts the finding of this study to examine how students enrolled in public institutions relate to social competences, career anxiety, and academic stress. The study found that the hierarchical regression positive significant predictor of academic stress on career anxiety. The possible reason might be due to the use of different approaches and instruments for assessing academic stress or career anxiety.

Recommendation and suggestions for future researchers

In the light of result and finding of the study the researcher suggests some recommendations. Stress management workshops may be organized, and arrange career guidance programs that help students understand their career options and make informed decisions, reducing career-related anxiety. The present study suggests some points for future research. The present study included eight faculties' professional degree students from university of Sargodha, Sargodha. This study was conducted through a quantitative research approach the qualitative research approach may be used by future researchers to conduct similar research. This study may be repeated by using a broad and random sample

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