The Role of Socioeconomic Status and Family Support in Shaping Career Decision Self-Efficacy Among Undergraduates

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Abstract

The goal of this research was to gain deeper insights into how social standing and familial backing relate to the career choice processes of young people during their undergraduate studies. The study analyzed a proposed theoretical model examining how well career choice self-efficacy and aspirations of career-linked results could be anticipated among 200tertiary education level participants. Predictors included the student's socioeconomic standing, their sense of social status, their parents' level of support, and the frequency with which they discussed their career goals with their parents. ThePLS (partial least square) path modeling has been utilized to analyze the causal relationship between SES, family backing, and CDSE. The outcomes of this given research indicate that there has beena correlationamong two factors related to the family –perceived socioeconomic status and level of family support - and specific social cognitive outcomes pertaining to career development.

Keywords:career choice,perceived family support, perceived social standing, self-efficacy

Introduction

It is well-established that a person's upbringing significantly influences their eventual career path. It is within the setting of their families that children learn and develop their professional identities, values, expectations, and ambitions. Scientists have uncovered that one's upbringing plays a crucial role in determining the trajectory of one's professional life. Several family environment factors linked to youth occupational behavior include socioeconomic standing, the structure of the family (e.g., only parent classification), parents' professional and educational status, parent-child relationship, parental support, parenting style, parental involvement and parental aspirations about academic performance (Whiston & Keller, 2004), (Mwaa, 2016). (Metheny & Mcwhirter, 2013) their study suggested examining the influence of four social supports mentioned by Tardy children's career outcomes. They used MLE (maximum likelihood estimation) path modeling to analyze the variables. The present study examinesthe causal relationship among the perceived social standing and family support in choices of career made by students using PLS path modeling.

1.1 Socio-economic Status and Career Decision Self-Efficacy

The Social Cognitive Career Theoryproposed by Lent et al.offers a valuable conceptual framework for comprehending the association between the socio-economic statusalong the career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) of young adults. According to SCCT, socioeconomic status, considered a personal characteristic, can influence an individual's belief in their own abilities by shaping their learning experiences(Hsieh & Huang, 2014). The learning and achievement opportunities available to individuals are linked to their family's socioeconomic status. It is well established that socioeconomic status has a significant impact on educational and vocational ambitions and that those from lower SES families have fewer of both. Individuals belonging to a higher socioeconomic status (SES) are more inclined to possess greater educational resources and expectations, a wider range of occupational role models, and improved access to parental support(Bozgeyikli et al., 2009)(Metheny & Mcwhirter, 2013).On the

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contrary, (Ali et al., 2005)observed no significant correlation between the socio-economic status along the CDSE of the grade-9 students belonging to economically weaker sections. Similar results of a non-significant relation between SES and self-efficacy were found in research performed by Tang et al., with college students in America.Thus, empirical investigations exploring the connection between socioeconomic status (SES) and self-efficacy beliefs related to careers have yielded varied and inconclusive findings. In the literature review, socioeconomic status (SES) has been operationalized in diverse ways. Researchers have employed different measures such as occupational status, parental educational level, income, and additional factors like marital status, gender, occupation, and education. Some studies have utilized the Differential Status Identity Scale (DSIS), which considers socioeconomic status as the psychological construct encompassing economic resources, social prestige, and social power. However, there is no consensus among researchers regarding the definitive operationalization of SES. Present study has used parental (mother and father) educational level and occupation as indicators of socioeconomic status.

1.2 Family Support and Career Decision Self-Efficacy

Family process parameters, which consist of connections between families, parenting goals and standards, support from the family, and advocacy, have been shown to play an even greater part in career development when weighed against family structural stability variables, which include factors like parents' academic and professional backgrounds, a single parent's social standing, and familial socioeconomic status, with the value as societal the classroom or SES (Whiston & Keller, 2004). Adolescents who feel their parents are encouraging are more likely to have high aspirations for themselves and ambitious educational goals. more confidence in one's capability to attain career and educational goals (Garcia et al., 2012). The study findings by (Katz et al., 2018) indicate that parents could positively impact their adolescent children's career decisions by supporting their autonomy while also providing guidance to help them make independent choices. Results demonstrated associations between both family socioeconomic background and perceived family support with social-cognitive career development variables. Specifically, animportant positive relationship was shown between perceived social support by the family &CDSE-SF in final-year students (Metheny & Mcwhirter, 2013). (Salwani & Cahyawulan, 2022) proposed that higher education career centers could leverage family factors as a source of counseling support. Involving family and capitalizing on perceived familial encouragement may help bolster students' confidence and aptitude when navigating career pathways. Research by (Fouad et al., 2010) indicates that two forms of family support in particular, informational backing and high aspirations, connect to stronger career decision self-efficacy for university students. More specifically, when a family provides guidance, recommendations, and helpful information, as well as expresses optimism and ambitions for their educational as well as professional futures, students are inclined to feel more capable and assured regarding their potential to successfully navigate career-related choices, options exploration, and planning.

Past research observed a stronger association among an adolescent's self-perception of support and outcomes, as opposed to correlation and prediction when considering reports from others outside the adolescent experience. With this in mind, the current study places specific importance on using the participant's self-reported views and experiences of supportive behaviors received from family members, rather than collecting perspective from external sources.

1.3 Hypothesis

H_0 1: There is no correlation between socioeconomic status of college students and their career decision self-efficacy.

H_0 2: There is no correlation between socioeconomic status and career decision self-efficacy among

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college students.

1. METHOD

2.1 Hypothesized Model
Figure 1: Theoretical Model to study the role of SES & family support in CDSE-SFamong tertiary learners.
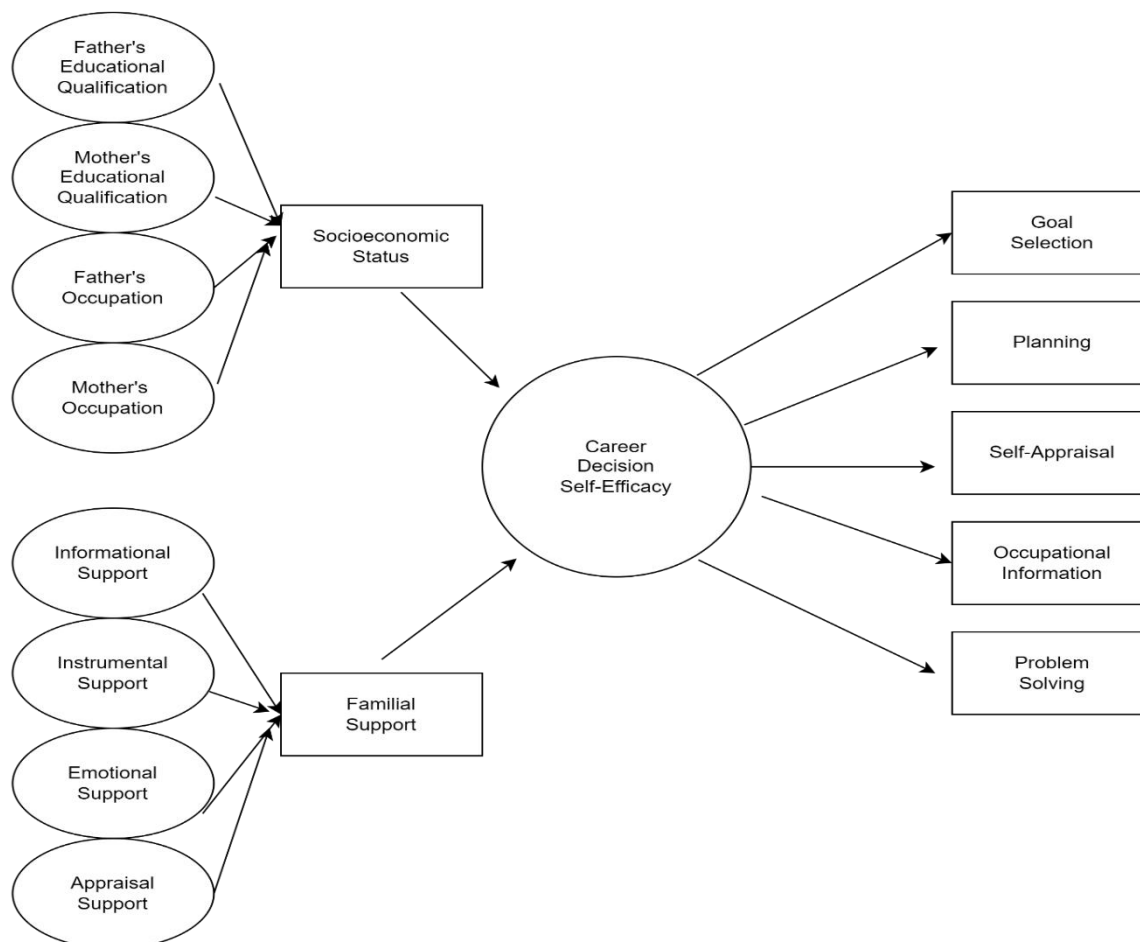
2.2 Study sample
200 undergraduate students aged 18–22 (Mean age 19.8 years, SD 1.4) from 4 colleges (2 Noida, 2 greater Noida) participated. 91 boys and 109 girls constituted the sample for the study. Colleges were selected by convenience sampling followed by a random selection of participants. The courses they were enrolled in varied from BBA, B.Ed., Journalism, etc. The sample had a mix of students from 1st year to 4th year of their study courses. The questionnaire meant to collect the relevant information for the present study was given out in digital format explaining the aim of this research and assuring the data collected confidentiality.

2.3 Measures

- *Socioeconomic status:* The participants provided some basic background information such as their characteristics. The demographic details collected included factors like age, gender, year of study, field of study, and other descriptive attributes about the sample population. Due to privacy concerns and constraints around accessing the exact earnings of parents, socioeconomic status of college students in this study was assessed using four indirect indicators rather than income level directly. The SES indicators included parental demographics like education and job titles.

- *Perceived Family Support*. (Way & Rossman, 1996) developed a scale consisting of five items to measure individuals' understanding of support for career advancement. Since the original items focused primarily on instrumental support, 5 more items were added to the questionnaire to capture informational, emotional, and appraisal support based on Tardy's 1985 framework of four types of support. By incorporating these additional items, the modified version of the scale now consisted of a total of 10 items. The reliability of this modified scale was assessed using the alpha coefficient, which yielded a value of .85 in the sample used for the study. This indicates a high level of internal consistency among the items in measuring support perceptions for thedevelopment of a career. The participants have been asked to assess the level of support they received from their family while growing up. They had response options scales from no support (scored as 1) to considerable support (scored as 3). Higher scores on the scale indicated a greater perception of support from their family during their upbringing.

- A shortened version of the *Career Decision Self-Efficacy*Scale (CDSE-SF), developed by Betz et al. in 1996, has been utilized to calculate college students' confidence in making career-related decisions. The CDSE-SF contains 25 items across 5 subscales: self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving. Example items included evaluating one's ideal job, researching careers online, choosing a major that fits one's interests, determining steps to complete a chosen major, and persisting towards career goals despite obstacles. Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from no confidence to complete confidence. Higher scores indicated higher career decision self-efficacy. The reliability of the subscales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The alphas were .79, .70, .74, .78, and .69 for the respective subscales. The overall 25-item CDSE-SF showed high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .91.

2.4 Data Analysis

PLS-PM does not require distributional assumptions and can handle complex models, making it well-suited for analyzing relationships involving multiple formative constructs (Hair & Alamer, 2022). Moreover, it is capable of handling reflective constructs simultaneously with formative indicators(Chin et al., 1998). In the present study, socioeconomic status and parental support are both likely to be modeled as formative constructs, as their indicators (e.g., income level, education, presence/absence of parental involvement) each contribute to defining the overall construct but are not necessarily correlated, while CDSE represents reflective construct. Thus, partial least square path modelling was chosen to analyse the correlation between the variables under study. SmartPLS4 software was used to test the hypotheses.

2. RESULTS

Table-1 depictsthe descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, average variance extracted (AVE),

and correlations among the variables examined in this study. The single reflective construct (CDSE) exhibited a composite reliability score of 0.9, surpassing the minimum threshold of 0.60. This indicates that the construct demonstrated satisfactory levels of internal consistency. Furthermore, it achieved an AVE value exceeding 0.50, meeting the recommended standard for convergent validity (Bollen, 2011). Discriminant validity has been computed by comparing the square root of the AVE to the correlations among the latent constructs. Adequate discriminant validity has been formed when the square root of the AVE has been greater in comparison to all other cross-correlations. The outcomes indicate that the measurement properties of scale employed in this research fulfilled the statistical quality criteria. In conclusion, Table 1 provides evidence supporting the validity along with therreliability of the measurement tool used, as it presents the psychometric characteristics of the scale

TABLE 1

Variable	M	SD	α	CR	AVE	1	2	3
1. SES	1.83	0.33				-		
2. Family Support	3.35	0.55				-		
3. CDSE	3.5	0.45	0.9	0.9	0.66	0.39^*	0.54^*	(0.81)
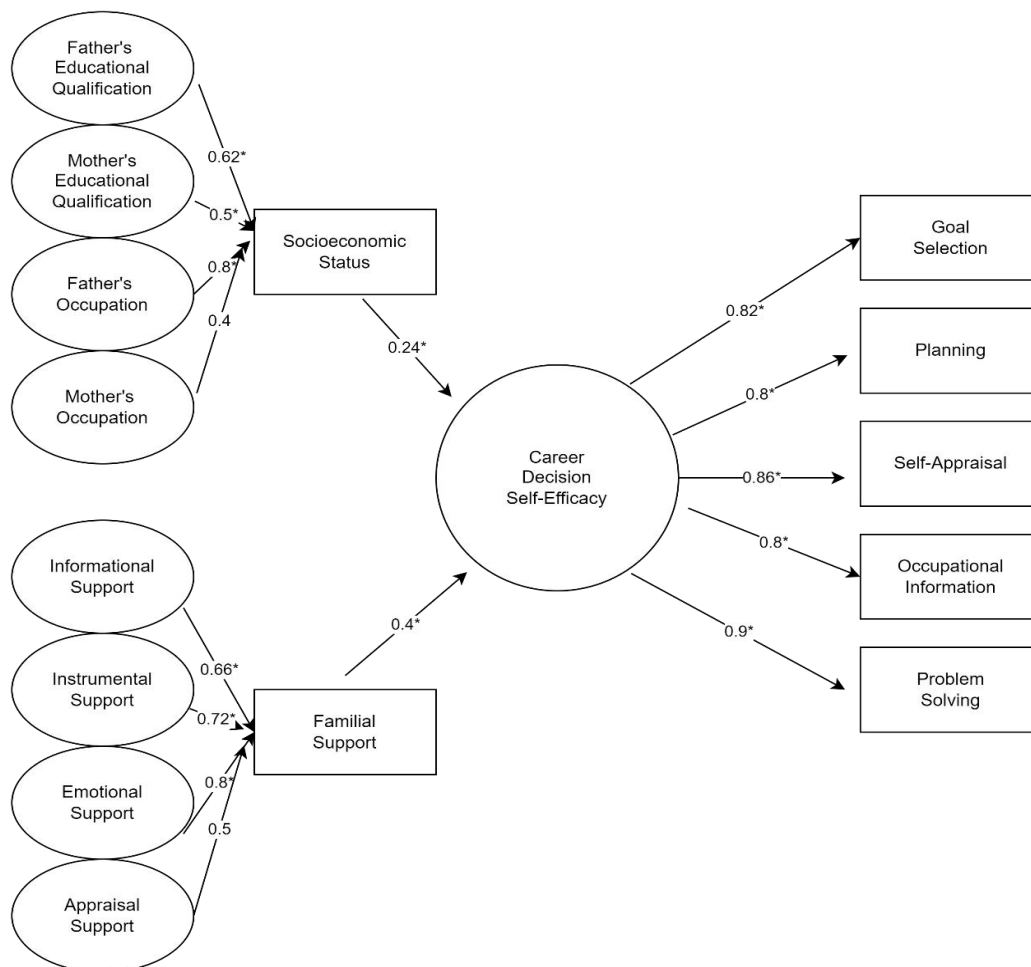
Figure 2: PLS for a hypothesized model with significant weights indicated with an asterisk (*)

The findings reveal that, as indicated in Fig 2, the weights of parental education (both mother and father) and father's occupation on the formative-indicator construct of social status were statistically significant ($p< .01$). However, the weights of mother's occupation on SES did not demonstrate statistical significance. In addition, all the weights of familial support were found statistically significant at a threshold weight of more than 0.5 (Cenfetelli & Bassellier, 2009). Furthermore, all the factor loadings for a reflective-indicator made of CDSE were above 0.60 and demonstrated statistical significance ($p<.01$). The outcomes indicated positive associations between both SES and family backing/support with CDSE. Together, these variables contributed to 34percent of the variance in CDSE. Consequently, both hypotheses $H_0 1$ and $H_0 2$ were rejected and it was concluded that SES and family backing have a significant correlation with CDSE.

DISCUSSION

The finding that parental education levels (mother and father) and father's occupation significantly contributed to the formative SES construct while the mother's occupation did not is interesting and

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suggests different family roles may differentially impact SES. The statistical significance and magnitude (>0.5) of all weights for the familial support construct indicate it was reliably measured. This lends validity to subsequent analyses involving family support. The high factor loadings (>0.6) and significance of all loadings for the CDSE reflective construct demonstrate good reliability and internal validity for this measure. The statistically significant positive associations between both SES and family support with CDSE, accounting for 29% and 34% of CDSE variance respectively, provide strong empirical support for Hypotheses 1 and 2. This clearly shows the predictive relevance of socioeconomic status and perceived family support for career decision self-efficacy. Overall, the reported results seem to be statistically robust and sound. The measures performed well and meaningful effects were detected between theoretical constructs, validating the underlying hypotheses. This increases confidence in the conclusions that can be drawn from the study regarding how family factors relate to career development

LIMITATIONS and SUGGESTIONS

The first limitation of the present study is that the socioeconomic range represented among the participants was somewhat restricted in its variability population being the college students only. This restricted diversity could impact the ability to generalize the results across all socioeconomic classes. The relationships found between variables like family influences and career decision self-efficacy may operate differently for populations of distinctly low or high socioeconomic backgrounds that were underrepresented in the sample due to the exclusive focus on current college attendees. Thus, it is suggested to take a more diverse group to establish causal relationships in future investigations. Secondly, in the present study, both family support and CDSE were measured through self-reports alone, the significant association found between them could be artificially strengthened by common rater effects rather than an authentic relationship. Therefore, it is suggested to collect data on one or more variables from an additional source, such as family members, teachers, or peers. This multi-source approach would help control for self-report bias in future studies. The third limitation is that the sample collection is restricted to 4 colleges in Noida, a city in India. Since the study used a sample from a single culture, the generalization of the findings to other cultures may be limited. To strengthen the applicability of our findings and its consistency across cultures, future research could replicate this model with more diversecultural samples.

Furthermore, the socioeconomic status was operationalized using objective indices like parental education and profession only. However, these measures alone may not fully capture the psychological impact of social class. The subjective experience of the social class is equally important to understand the psychological effect. Thus, examining both subjective and objective indices could provide richer insights into their effects on career decision self-efficacy.

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