

## **The Role of Career Counselling in Job and Career Development**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the long-term stability of the positive effects obtained through career guidance. This study focussed on the longitudinal effects of career guidance on students' major satisfaction. Data from the Korea Education and Employment Panel (KEEP) were analysed by applying SPSS 18.0 and AMOS 18.0 to investigate the mediation effect of students' self-efficacy between career guidance and students' major satisfaction. Results indicated a continual increase of self-efficacy in long-term stabilisation with regard to students' satisfaction with their academic majors. This study quantitatively investigated the long-term stability of the positive effects obtained through career guidance. Although the findings were somewhat tentative, there was preliminary support for the influence of three critical ingredients: counselling, career information and professor guidance in all types of career guidance. However, additional research is needed to identify which students benefit from which career guidance and under what circumstances.

*Keywords:* Career guidance, longitudinal effect, major satisfaction, mediation, self-efficacy

### **INTRODUCTION**

The increased policy interest in career guidance provision is evident in the overlapping policy reviews conducted in the last decade by influential international

organisations (Watts, 2012). According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's definition (OECD, 2004), career guidance is services with the goal of helping people of any age and at any point throughout their lives to manage their careers. Internationally, to meet the changing demands of society, schools must acknowledge their responsibility towards guiding young people in lifelong job and career development (Perdrix, Stauffer, Masdonati, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2011).

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Career guidance has been related to self-efficacy, and people with high self-efficacy have greater outcome expectations than people with low self-efficacy (Day & Allen, 2004). People with more positive outcome expectations may put in greater effort and, therefore, see successful career development. In college, students are at a very important stage because they are supposed to set their career development such as career planning or career decisiveness at this stage (Winters, Meijers, Kuijpers, & Baert, 2009).

Many researchers also have expressed a need for career guidance outcome studies, especially longitudinal studies (Hughes, Bosley, Bowes, & Bysshe, 2002; Perdrix et al., 2011). There is huge variation in effectiveness among different approaches (Swanson, 1995; Whiteley, 1984). Further, the literature on the long-term effectiveness of career guidance is extremely limited (OECD, 2004). Only a few researchers have investigated the progression of career guidance outcomes using longitudinal methodology. Due to the cost of conducting longitudinal studies and the difficulty of getting long-term data, there are very limited longitudinal effectiveness studies (Perdrix et al., 2011). Thus, the long-term effectiveness of career guidance is often overlooked.

With this necessity, this study aimed to investigate the long-term stability of the positive effects obtained through career guidance on self-efficacy one year after and on major satisfaction two years after career guidance. This study focussed on the longitudinal effects of counselling, career

information and professor guidance on college students' major satisfaction.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Career Guidance

The current concept of career development interventions is to help individuals to be the subjects of their own being. Such concepts are a major change from old concepts of earlier career development interventions in most countries. At one time, career guidance took the form of the relatively directive method where a professional guided young people who were finishing school and beginning to go into the job market (Savickas, 2003). In today's context, three components of career guidance services can be distinguished (Watts, 2010):

- 1) Career counselling: This is conducted on an individual basis, focussing on the career issues faced by young people.
- 2) Career education: This is part of the curriculum and focusses on helping young people to develop their abilities for managing their job and career.
- 3) Career information: This is provided in various formats and is concerned with information on the labour market, career paths, jobs and courses.

### Self-Efficacy

Career guidance has often been related to an important explanatory construct, self-efficacy, or more specifically, career decision-making self-efficacy (Maguire &

Killeen, 2003; Swanson, 1995; Whiteley, 1984). According to Judge, Erez and Bono (1998), self-efficacy is individuals' perception of their ability to perform across a variety of situations. It is regarded as an individually different long-term construct in relation to individuals' effort to overcome obstacles and to cope with their choice behaviour.

Day and Allen (2004) examined the role of self-efficacy in career development. People with high self-efficacy have more positive outcome expectations, which leads to having greater effort and better performance. Research has also shown that low levels of self-efficacy in career development will lead to an avoidance of career decision-making behaviour and less job satisfaction. Furthermore, high levels of self-efficacy in career development are related to success of career planning and decisiveness (Swanson, 1995; Whiteley, 1984).

### **Major Satisfaction**

Major satisfaction represents an important ultimate goal of career guidance and is often regarded as an indicator of effective job and career development (Allen, 1996; Graunke & Woosley, 2005). Major satisfaction for college students represents an important construct associated with their academic performance and their future career plans (Graunke & Woosley, 2005). For students, major satisfaction is equal to job satisfaction because, like work environments, academic environments vary with respect to opportunity to use various

skills and interests (Allen, 1996). Major satisfaction also may also be a proxy for later job satisfaction and career success because many college programmes cannot be run without their respective social and vocational environments (Astin, 1965). Furthermore, studies investigating major satisfaction are limited in job and career development literature and the findings have been inconclusive (Savickas, 2003; Watts, 2012).

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study used the Korea Education and Employment Panel (KEEP) data produced by the Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education Training (KRIVET) from 2013 to 2015. The data contains various educational and vocational variables related to students, parents, teachers and school administrators. KEEP has been gathering data on cohorts of students of middle schools, high schools and vocational and technical schools since 2004. This study used the data collected on college students because the data concerned students progressing from middle school to college. This made it possible to figure out the long-term effect of various factors on college life including career guidance, which the students had encountered two years previously.

The final number of observations in the data of this study were 357. Male students comprised 32.2% of the sample, while female students comprised 67.8% of the sample. Also presented were students' gender, major, school type and school location for the current study.

## PROCEDURE AND DATA ANALYSIS

As suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986), mediation effects through structural equation modelling (SEM) techniques were investigated using SPSS 18.0 and AMOS 18.0. With SEM, multiple indicators (i.e. ability, preference, life value and career decision self-efficacy) of our hypothesised mediator variable were incorporated directly into the model. This made it possible to deal with the bias that measurement error can produce in the estimation of mediated effects. Furthermore, the variables used in the analysis were normally distributed, which generalised the approach to normality of the sampling distributions of the variables.

The procedure contained three steps: First, the independent variable must affect the mediation variable significantly. Second, the independent variable must affect the dependent variable significantly. Third, the mediation variable must affect the dependent variable significantly and the effect of the independent variable on the third stage must be smaller than in the second stage. In this regression, if the effect of the independent variable in the third stage is significantly different from 0, the relationship among them is partial mediation. If the effect of the independent variable in the third stage is not significantly different from 0, the relationship among them is complete mediation.

The following are the research question and the hypotheses that guided this study:

1. Research Question 1. Does career guidance have longitudinal and positive effects on college students' satisfaction with their academic majors?
  - Hypothesis 1.1 – Counselling will have longitudinal and positive effects on students' satisfaction with their academic majors.
  - Hypothesis 1.2 – Career information will have longitudinal and positive effects on students' satisfaction with their academic majors.
  - Hypothesis 1.3 – Professor guidance will have longitudinal and positive effects on students' satisfaction with their academic majors.
2. Research Question 2. Does self-efficacy have a mediated effect between career guidance and students' satisfaction with their academic majors?
  - Hypothesis 2.1 – Students' self-efficacy will have a mediated effect between career guidance and students' satisfaction with their academic majors.

## RESULTS

### Mediation analysis

All four of Baron and Kenny's (1986) conditions for mediation were met in the analysis. (a) Career guidance was significantly associated with self-efficacy ( $\beta=0.157$ ,  $p<0.001$ ); (b) career guidance was significantly associated with major satisfaction ( $\beta=0.222$ ,  $p<0.001$ ); (c) self-efficacy was significantly associated with major satisfaction ( $\beta=0.291$ ,  $p<0.001$ ); (d)

the impact of career guidance on major satisfaction in the presence of the mediators was smaller ( $\beta=0.176$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) compared with (b) (see Table 5). The mediated

analysis in the condition fit the data.  $\chi^2=(33, N=357)=114.2$ ,  $p<0.001$ , the comparative fit index (CFI)=0.934, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI)=0.937.

Table 1  
Summary of investigating Baron and Kenny's conditions for mediation

|                    | Path                 | B     | S.E   | $\beta$ | t        |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| Stage 1            |                      |       |       |         |          |
| Career Guidance    | → Self-efficacy      | 0.157 | 0.046 | 0.178   | 3.407*** |
| Counselling        | → Self-efficacy      | 0.146 | 0.039 | 0.196   | 3.770*** |
| Career Information | → Self-efficacy      | 0.113 | 0.038 | .155    | 2.956**  |
| Professor Guidance | → Self-efficacy      | 0.054 | 0.034 | 0.083   | 1.571    |
| Stage 2            |                      |       |       |         |          |
| Career Guidance    | → Major Satisfaction | 0.222 | 0.062 | 0.186   | 3.565*** |
| Counselling        | → Major Satisfaction | 0.186 | 0.053 | 0.185   | 3.541*** |
| Career Information | → Major Satisfaction | 0.175 | 0.051 | 0.178   | 3.403*** |
| Professor Guidance | → Major Satisfaction | 0.079 | 0.046 | 0.090   | 1.710    |
| Stage 3            |                      |       |       |         |          |
| Career Guidance    | → Major Satisfaction | 0.222 | 0.062 | 0.186   | 3.565*** |
| Self-efficacy      | → Major Satisfaction | 0.186 | 0.053 | 0.185   | 3.541*** |
| Counselling        | → Major Satisfaction | 0.175 | 0.051 | 0.178   | 3.403*** |
| Self-efficacy      | → Major Satisfaction | 0.079 | 0.046 | 0.090   | 1.710    |
| Career Information | → Major Satisfaction | 0.175 | 0.051 | 0.178   | 3.403*** |
| Self-efficacy      | → Major Satisfaction | 0.079 | 0.046 | 0.090   | 1.710    |

Note. N=357, \*\* :  $p<0.01$  \*\*\* :  $p<0.001$

Specifically, I tried to investigate each component of career guidance, so I analysed the each three questions for career guidance because these questions contained different information related to career guidance. Two components of career guidance, counselling and career information, met all four of Baron and Kenny's (1986) conditions in our analysis. First, (a) counseling was significantly ( $\beta=0.146$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) associated with self-

efficacy; (b) counselling was significantly associated with major satisfaction ( $\beta=0.186$ ,  $p<0.001$ ); (c) self-efficacy was significantly associated with major satisfaction ( $\beta=0.289$ ,  $p<0.001$ ); (d) the impact of counselling on major satisfaction in the presence of the mediators was smaller ( $\beta=0.144$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) compared with (b). Second, (a) career information was significantly associated with self-efficacy ( $\beta=0.113$ ,  $p<0.01$ ); (b) career information was significantly

associated with major satisfaction; (c) self-efficacy was significantly associated with major satisfaction ( $\beta=0.296$ ,  $p<0.001$ ); (d) the impact of career information on major satisfaction in the presence of the mediators was smaller ( $\beta=0.142$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) compared with (b). However, professor guidance on subject matter was not only significantly associated with self-efficacy ( $\beta=0.054$ ,  $p>0.05$ ); but also significantly associated with major satisfaction ( $\beta=0.079$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

The results indicated different influences of career guidance on self-efficacy and major satisfaction. Counselling and career information were more effective variables for enhancing students' self-efficacy and their subsequent major satisfaction compared

with professor guidance. Furthermore, the results showed partial mediation of self-efficacy between career guidance and students' major satisfaction.

It was then investigated whether the path from career guidance to major satisfaction equals zero. The chi-square for this model differed significantly from the preliminary mediated model  $\chi^2=(34, N=357)=122.5$ ,  $p<0.001$ , the comparative fit index (CFI)=0.928, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI)=0.932. Thus, the preliminary model was retained and is illustrated in Figure 2. The indirect effect of career guidance was significant,  $z=2.116$ ,  $p<0.05$ . The results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Estimates in Mediation Model*

|                 | Path                 | Unstandardised estimates<br>(Standardised estimates) |
|-----------------|----------------------|--|
| Career Guidance | → Counselling        | 1.547(0.795)***                                      |
| Career Guidance | → Career Information | 1.646(0.827)***                                      |
| Career Guidance | → Professor Guidance | 1.000(0.446)***                                      |
| Career Guidance | → Self-efficacy      | 0.331(0.228)***                                      |
| Career Guidance | → Major Satisfaction | 0.333(0.170)**                                       |
| Self-efficacy   | → Ability            | 1.000(0.780)***                                      |
| Self-efficacy   | → Preference         | 0.954(0.740)***                                      |
| Self-efficacy   | → Life-Value         | 0.858(0.693)***                                      |
| Self-efficacy   | → Decision-Making    | 0.927(0.695)***                                      |
| Self-efficacy   | → Planning           | 0.889(0.692)***                                      |
| Self-efficacy   | → Self-Respect       | 0.914(0.714)***                                      |
| Self-efficacy   | → Major Satisfaction | 0.304(0.226)***                                      |

Note. N=357, \*\* :  $p<0.01$ , \*\*\* :  $p<0.001$



## DISCUSSION

The results showed that individual differences of students caused huge effects, but it is believed that it is too early to reach this conclusion. While in this study, the effects of differences in students' gender, major, school type and school location were not studied in detail, it is very likely that when students have more distinguished characteristics, the outcomes could be quite different. The most important outcome of the present research is the longitudinal effects of career guidance on students' satisfaction for their academic majors with the mediation effect of self-efficacy. Thus, the goal of career guidance should help students to have more self-efficacy, which would lead to vocational identity and career development. Career issues such as reasons for taking specific classes, future plans and job selection of students should be on the agenda. Furthermore, schools have to focus on guidance in work practice, conversations between teachers, students and apprenticeship that contribute to students' career competency (Winters et al., 2009).

However, the fact that schools indicated they were providing career guidance for some period did not mean that every participating college student was experienced in good career guidance. Some faculty who had been giving career guidance for a couple of years, for example, could not yet be considered competent. Although schools in this research indicated that they used counselling, career information and professor guidance to guide students in their jobs and careers, this is still

a very new aspect of educational practice in Korea. More time and effort can be put into vocational education and training, including facilitation of faculty to fulfil this new task.

Faculty members, for example, should learn how to advise students about future career plans and job selection, besides school subjects. Earlier studies have already shown that teachers often spend most of their time in teaching about school subjects and find it difficult to broaden their responsibilities to discuss future students' careers (Winters et al., 2009). Also, teachers should be trained in student-centred teaching while providing guidance. For a learning environment in which students can initiate actions for their career, teachers should demonstrate less directing acts and enable students to control their own future career plans. Further research may contribute to how this facilitation of teachers can best be provided.

Certain limitations of the present study warrant consideration and suggest possibilities for further research. First, the study was done using the KEEP data; thus, results can only be generalized to colleges in Korea and, to an even lesser degree, to other school types internationally. Future research should further refine analyses on career guidance by using larger and more widespread data-sets. It would be valuable to investigate what kind of career guidance other countries use and compare the results between countries on effects of career guidance.

Lastly, the study focused only on outcomes in terms of students' satisfaction with their academic majors while students

were still taking college courses. Other student outcomes such as the development of a vocational competency could be investigated, as well as long-term effects with regards to skills for job and career development to be measured when students are entering the labor market. Finally, since the quantitative methodology provides only a few broad general results, it could be recommended to examine the subject matter using mixed methods. The use of multiple methodologies could include the combination of self-reports, interviews and case studies with the survey method. Thus, the use of quantitative and qualitative methods would have been preferable, since interview and observation data could have explained some more facts that were not explained through self-reported surveys.

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